THE GUIDE TO COMICS · 55

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J'M LEE

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MARCH 1996

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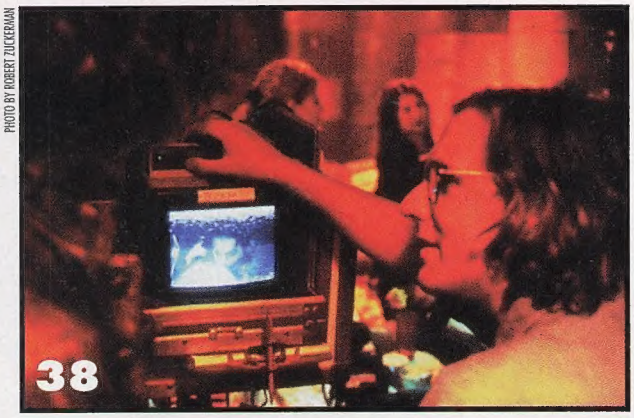

PHOTO BY ROBERT ZUCKERMAN

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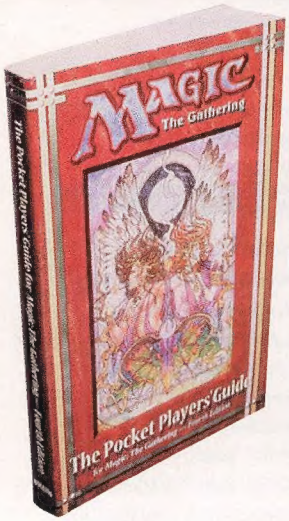

WIN!

MAGIC: THE GATHERING STUFF!

Pick your all-time favorite *Magic* artist, and win a mountain of *Magic* products! Turn to page **119** now!

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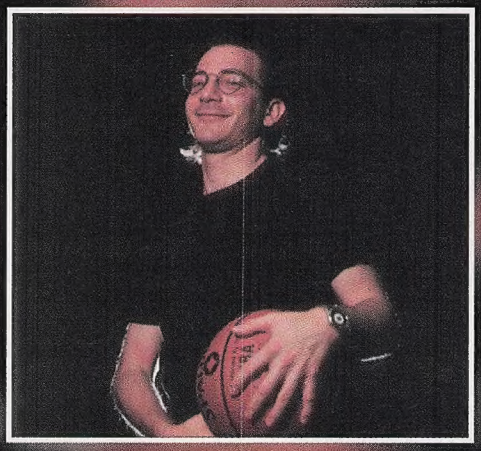
YEAH, WITH MY PLATFORM SHOES ON, I CAN HOLD MY OWN AGAINST THAT SHAQ TWERP!



Paul Schiraldi

A MARVELOUS IMAGE

Something happened in December that I didn't think would happen for a long time. Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld signed a deal with Marvel to do four monthly titles. There's always been speculation about crossovers and such, but now it's official. We've devoted pages in this issue to find out the other Image founders' reactions and industry reactions.

I have a very simple philosophy: If it's well done, fun for consumers and good for the industry, then I like it. I know Rob and Jim are very psyched about the deal and plan to give it 110 percent. If it works out, further opportunities to work with Marvel could be great.

Over the last few years, we have received thousands of letters asking, "When are the Image guys going to work for Marvel again?" The comic industry needs more events to garner excitement and a reason to come into the stores. This will surely be a great reason for fans to check out what these guys are doing. I think this news has all the qualities of becoming a success for Marvel, Jim, Rob and especially the fans.

We have some other new things on tap for this issue. Rob Allstetter takes over our Hollywood column "Trailer Park," Dan Albaugh reports on the hottest toy news in "Toy Chest" and Carl Horn takes "Manga Scene" to new heights as we prep for next month's big manga issue.

Oh, and make sure you send away for the *Vampirella* #1/2 issue. Harris Comics did a spectacular job.

See ya soon,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Next month we have a new insert—chromium cards—not just chromium, but clear chromium of Todd McFarlane's Angela. Make sure you check it out.

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MAGIC WORDS

Mind Your Manners, There's a Lady Present

Hi! I'm Kathy Newman. I work in the promotions department here at *Wizard*. So what am I doing in these parts this month? Well, we decided to give regular "Magic Words" writer Jim McLauchlin the month off. He needs the rest. Oh, you don't know just how much rest he needs. Some other things are going to get a rest this month too, like French-bashing and the nasty threats of violence that are generously sprinkled throughout this column on a monthly basis. Sorry. I know most of you like that stuff, but hey—everything deserves a rest now and then.

So what did we get in the letters bag this month? A whole bunch of letters responding to the Comics Code battle, the independent publishers battle and a big interest in Wolverine. Of course, there were the usual fanboys with those wacky comic book questions. What do they think this is anyway?

An Industry Run by Bullies

Magic Words,

This is a response to Mark Bittmann's letter in *Wizard* #52 calling comic book creators "agenda-driven, back-biting whiners." As a creator, I took great offense to parts of it, but whole-heartedly agree with others. First, as far as being "whiners," we're guilty as charged. Unlike a nameless, faceless corporation with no official views, we creators are individuals, with our own opinions, whether you think them valid or not.

Back-biters? Arrogant? Some of us, yes. Most of the back-biting stems from jealousy, and it's sometimes hard not to participate in it when you're working your butt off trying to get somewhere and someone else is making it big with material that's of far less quality than yours.

Overpaid? Here's where I beg to differ. For every independent comic in the Top 100, there are 50 others that make very little profit. I've had two comics published to date, both with international distribution, and I made $200 total for both.

By their very nature, independent comics don't make as much profit as mainstream titles because we're not trying to please a mass audience. Some independent material is not appropriate for children or may offend those with certain political or religious views.

As far as money being a major concern, it is. Creating comics (for me at least) is a paying career, not a part-time hobby. We work just as hard as anyone else, and deserve adequate remuneration for our efforts. Most comic creators come from lower- or middle-class backgrounds and work lousy "day jobs" while honing their craft. Most spend thousands of unpaid hours in practice until they get a paying position, not to mention all the money spent in supplies and postage.

Money can change people, of course. There's no longer any great need to bust your butt in order to get the next issue out so you can pay the rent, when you've made enough off of the last issue to buy a house. But we're people too. Don't we deserve to be able to relax and spend time with our loved ones and friends after working hard to get where we are?

As far as the "injustices of the work-for-hire atmosphere of the past" Mark mentioned: True. If any of us think Marvel or DC are going to turn character rights over to their creators, they are dreaming. But that reality doesn't make it right. The very least that could be done is credit given to the creators, and perhaps just a small percentage of future royalties. Let's face it: Without Jack Kirby, Stan Lee or Steve Ditko—just to name three—there would be no Marvel Comics as we know it today. Giving credit where credit is due is only fair and honest.

Mark had a point when he said that few creators are actually capable of all the aspects of storytelling. Once upon a time, the only place to get material published was with a publisher, and publishers generally had more stringent demands on the quality of the material. Now, anyone with a couple hundred bucks can publish a comic book themselves, regardless of quality. There's no need to practice your craft in private, when you can learn as you go along by getting your material in print.

Not a bad concept, in theory, but the problem arises when fans are turned away with the sheer amateurish nature of that creator's work. It doesn't matter how good a creator eventually gets—many fans will still have that mental picture in the back of their heads of that initial, poorly done work. Sometimes, as with your opinions, it's better to keep your work to yourself for a while until you've had time to think about it and are sure you're not going to embarrass yourself with what you "say."

Bottom line: You can't take us to task for trying to protect our jobs. While independent creators and comics don't really compete head-to-head with Marvel or DC, their recent actions in chang-

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

Having the time of your life.

Wish you were here.

NEIL GAIMAN
CHRIS BACHALO
MARK BUCKINGHAM
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DEATH
THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

ing the distribution system have threatened us. Because retailers have less profit to spend (thanks to decreased discounts from ordering from at least two distributors), where do you think they're going to cut corners? From established mainstream sellers? Or untested independents? Retailers might be just as angry with the big publishers as we are, but they have to stay in business, and good intentions don't pay the bills. The big boys, just like a bunch of bullies, couldn't compete fairly in our game, so they used their muscle and power to change the rules so they could win.

That's why we smaller guys hold the big guys in such contempt at times—not because we're jealous of their success but because, through their greed, they won't give us a fair chance. They won't face us on honest terms of quality or originality because, in most cases, they know they'll lose. But likewise, some of us could stand to put the same level of emotion and intensity we use in attacking the mainstream into our work itself. We need to not just tell people how great independent titles are, but *show* them by producing great independent comics.

In the end, it's up to you, the fans, to look past all the rhetoric and find and support comics you enjoy reading, no matter who produces them.

Mike Leonard
Writer/Creator, *DoorMan*
(Caliber Comics)
Cherry Tree, PA
MLeon99@aol.com

***Whew! Mark Bittman's letter was directed at Frank Miller, but it looks like he got Mike Leonard a little pissed off. This is one of those debates that could go on forever. It's pretty much a matter of opinion. But differences of opinion are what make life interesting. By the way, Mike, I read and enjoyed* DoorMan.**

Now on to more important issues.

THE LI'L WOLVERINE SECTION

Since we get so many letters about Wolverine, I figured I'd group them all together and get you all your answers. So I called Marvel and asked them to enlighten us.

If Wolverine had razor-sharp claws, wouldn't they cut him when they come out? His hands don't have protective coverings, so why doesn't he bleed?

Joey Davis
Muhlenburg, KY

Apparently, his razor-sharp claws do cut him, but his mutant healing factor heals the wounds quickly.

I would like to know if "Logan" is Wolverine's real name. Or is Wolverine's real last name "Creed?"

Collin McPake
Scarborough, Ontario, Canada

As far as we know, "Logan" is Wolverine's real name. And Creed is not his last name. In other words, he's not Sabretooth's son.

I have a few Wolverine questions.

1. Why is it that Wolverine can still cut through anything, even though his bone claws are no longer laced with that amazing metal called Adamantium?

2. In an issue of *Wolverine*, we learned that Wolvie is very old. His healing factor didn't let him feel the effects of his age and his healing factor was based mainly on his Adamantium. So doesn't it stand to reason that if he has no Adamantium, all those years would catch up with him?

Scott Dewsbury
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

First off, although his claws are still very sharp, they cannot cut through everything. The man has his limitations. Secondly, no, his healing factor has nothing to do with his Adamantium. They are two completely independent things.

How old is Wolverine really?

Sinuhe Viramontes
Paramount, CA

No one knows.

Mmm...Nougat

Dear Magic Words,

I was recently eating a Three Musketeers bar when a question came to me: What exactly is nougat, that fluffy filling in the middle? I tried asking one of my friends, but she gave me an incredibly rude answer. I really hope you can answer this for me, as it plagues me day and night. Thank you.

Michael P. Station
Pearl River

Sorry to hear about that rude friend of yours. Obviously, she doesn't understand the importance of your question. Wait! Now that I think about it, neither do I. Don't you have anything else to think about?

Survey Says...

Wizard: The Guide to Comics,

How much effect does a single person's survey have on *Wizard*? In the past I've overlooked surveys, thinking that my little insignificant input would have no impact on a magazine if they even took the time to read it.

But a few months ago an offer you ran had the question, "What other *Wizard* offers would you like to see?" I wrote "X-Files #1/2." A few days ago, I received *Wizard* #52. I was extremely happy to see the X-Files cover and X-Files feature. Then I read that the next issue would have an *X-Files* #1/2 offer! Whoa, Nellie! Is this all because of me?

P.S. The Cedar Springs Marching Band kicks triple ass!!!

John Schmidt
Cedar Springs, MI
Red Flannel Town, U.S.A.

Yes, John. It's true. We were at a loss. Couldn't decide what do next. There we were, in the "big" meeting, when someone finally said: "John's right! Let's go with X-Files!" The rest is history.

P.S. Sorry, I've never known a marching band to kick ass, let alone triple.

Feed a Comic, Starve a Kid

Dear Wizard,

Could y'all tell Image to lower their prices? I collect over 15 regular titles, plus mini-series and back issues and it's getting expensive. I'm 14 and have to pay for most of my books by missing lunch.

Chrystal Eaton
Austin, TX

It sounds to me like Chrystal's not Eaton.
[Editor's Note: It appears that Jim has had far more influence on Kathy than we ever imagined...]

A Star in the Making

Dear Wizard,

Recently, I looked through my old video game magazines and found something that interested me. The May/June 1989, issue of *Nintendo Power*

announced the winner of its "Invent the Ultimate Video Game" contest as being 15-year-old Jeffrey Scott Campbell. I was wondering if this is the same Jeffrey Scott Campbell that currently draws *Gen*[13] for Image Comics?

Kimsang Lor
Tacoma, WA

I called J. Scott Campbell and he said that yes, indeed it is him. He won for his entry called "Lockarm" but nothing ever came out of it (that's if you call working on Gen[13] nothing). He did get his picture in the magazine though.

Comics Need Women

Dear Someone,

I have never written a letter to a magazine, newspaper or any type of fan mail, but I have finally stumbled across something that has prompted me to write. In a recent issue of *Wizard,* there is a page containing lists of the Top Ten artists and writers. Upon first glance over the page, I took the time to laugh at Neil Gaiman and Alan Moore's pictures, then went on to check out the other names on the list. It was only after I had turned the page that I realized that something was not quite right. There is not one picture of a female writer or artist on the lists.

Now don't get me wrong. I know the comic book business is predominately a male thing, but don't you think that they're jumping over the girls just a bit. It would be nice to see at least one female mug shot on those lists. To name a few, I would add: Jill Thompson (illustrator of *The Invisibles*), Ann Nocenti (writer of *Daredevil, Spider-Man, Typhoid* and lots of other stuff), and Louise Simonson (writer of *Superman* and *Star Wars* titles).

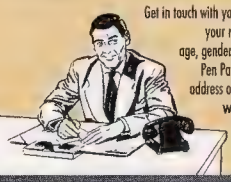
Please don't take me as a feminist, as I'd really hate that. I'm just a fiction writer who is taken a little aback when I see the odds against me. I hope I'm not alone in thinking that it would be great to have a lot more female talent on the market.

Thank you for your ear.

Michelle Gentes
Victoria, B.C., Canada

First of all, I didn't give you my ear. Secondly, these lists are a compilation of surveys based on sales and popularity. Of course, sales and popularity go hand in hand. If a title is popular, sales will increase. It's true that a majority of comic readers are male, and therefore males are the ones buying the books. Do they prefer men writers and artists over women writers and artists? How would we know? Maybe a woman could write or draw using a man's name. I called Colleen Doran, publisher and creator of A Distant Soil and asked her opinion. She said, "If you're a woman trying to get into this business, don't hold your breath." Colleen found it very difficult to break into this male dominated

Hey! It's Pen Pals



Get in touch with your fellow comic fans! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the Magic Words address on page 12. **NOTE: Please write your age clearly on the envelope.** Hey, make a friend!

PEN PALS

Tasha Raven Feather
Age: 19 Sex: Female
1113 Valley Park Dr.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Likes: *Goddess, Shade, The Books of Magic*

Christopher Creek
Age: 16 Sex: Male
3824 S.W. 41st Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73119
Likes: *Spawn, WetWorks, Elfquest*

Nicholas Geraci
Age: 15 Sex: Male
5254 Serenade Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45238
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men,* most *Star Wars* titles, *Spider-Man 2099*

Maria Cline
Age: 15 Sex: Female
1001 Jersey Street
Washington, IN 47501
Likes: *Superman, Superboy, X-Men*

Charles Masson
Age: 15 Sex: Male
14, rue de Naples
75008 Paris, France
Likes: *Gen*[13], *Generation X, Uncanny X-Men*

Dave E. Sanchez
Age: 22 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 644
Donald, OR 97020-0644
Likes: *The Vampire Lestat, Ren & Stimpy,* almost all comics

Sarah Sarver
Age: 17 Sex: Female
2531 Hardwood
Bryan, TX 77803
Likes: All X-titles, *WildC.A.T.s, Green Lantern*

industry. She was told that her work was "too feminine." She thinks the comic book industry should realize that there are girls out there who read comics and have money to spend too.

This might sound kind of bleak, but I suggest if you're a female writer, artist or penciler, keep on trying—things are changing.

Selling Garbage

Dear Wizard Wise Ones:

I've been reading comics for approximately 30 years. (With the exception of a five-year hiatus during which time I thought it was uncool to do so. That now looks like a bad move on my part, since I'm paying through the nose for those missing back issues.) I have also picked up a handful of *Wizard* issues here and then. I consider myself at least somewhat knowledgeable regarding comic book lingo. But for the life of me, I still can't figure out what the heck an "ashcan" is and have yet to find a definition for it. I throw myself at your mercy for enlightenment.

Tom Neel
Norman, OK

Believe it or not, Tom, there's a real answer to this one. Back in the late 1930s-early 1940s—when there was a big boom in comics—publishers felt that they should plan ahead and get comic titles copyrighted for future use. They literally took spoiled comic pages out of the "ash can" (or trash can) and put new covers with new titles on them and sent them to Washington, D.C. to be copyrighted. For example, DC Comics may have taken a batch of misprinted Superman pages and slapped on a new cover with the title "Flying Guy" on it. This would prevent other publishers from using the new title. Publishers usually made only a few dozen copies of each ashcan, put a few away in their permanent files and gave a few to employees as souvenirs. Any remainders were usually chucked right back in the trash. In the late 1980s, some old ashcans started to resurface and began trading for thousands of dollars because they were so incredibly rare. In the '90s, publishers started printing previews or smaller versions of new titles and selling them as "ashcans" hoping to cash in on the good name.

Jim McLauchlin, This is Your Life

Dear Sir/Madam:

I have several questions concerning Jim McLauchlin that have arisen purely out of curiosity.

1) What's his middle name?

2) What size shoe does he wear? What brand?

3) Does he personally read and answer each letter received by "Magic Words"?

4) What kind of car does he drive?

5) Who's his favorite comic book character?

6) Where did he go to school?

7) Does he have any pets?

8) Does Mr. McLauchlin judge "Letter Art"?

9) Has any reader ever sent something to "Magic Words" (like money), as a bribe to print their letter?

10) Is he a speed reader?

11) Did Jimmy ever have any nicknames?

12) Does he support or oppose gun control?

Khalfani Garcia
Kingshill, VI

I went straight to the horse's mouth for these answers.

1) "Joseph."

2) "I'm a big fan of Converse All-Stars, but not those stinkin' nouveau-fashionable canvas high tops! I wear a size 10 1/2 or 11, depending on the humidity that day."

3) "I read 'em all. Unfortunately, because we get thousands a month, I only get the chance to answer a few."

4) "Pontiac Grand Am. Quad 4 engine. Red."

5) "Nick Fury."

6) "St. Paul Park High School, University of Minnesota-Duluth and the University of Minnesota. I finally graduated from the School of Hard Knocks."

7) "I love dogs, but I live in an apartment that doesn't allow them."

8) "No. Arlene So does."

9) "Yes, and Wizard Press donates it all to the Salvation Army." (Note: It doesn't help in getting your letter published.)

10) "Yes. I used to date Evelyn Wood. That chick is one hot tamale!"

11) "I used to be called 'Jimmy the Fish' but then I got better at poker."

12) "Support it."

We Looked It Up

Male•bol•gia (Mal bowl sha) *Image Universe.* 1 The evil being who turned Al Simmons into Spawn 2 Ruler of a corner of the Darklands, who plans on creating new soldiers for his Army of Darkness to go up against the Legions of Light in the Last Battle 3 The sound you make when you're sick in bed with the flu trying to hack up a big glob of mucus

Cyberspace Sucks

Dear Wizard,

Do you mind if I complain for a few minutes about how disgusted I've become with the average comics reader?

Last March, I managed to get hold of America Online. Brother, it was heaven! I thought DC Comics Online was the greatest place in the world, because I could now hold intelligent conversations with readers and pros throughout the nation on everything from polybags to Jack Kirby. It's been a lot of fun. So end of story, right?

Nope. In recent months, I've seen an incredible surge of "fanboys" hopping the net, popping up in DC with nothing intelligent to add. I'd say *Wizard* is partially to blame for this, since it's gone online, but it's not the sole cause. Basically, what happens is my friends and I could be talking about, say, Super-

PEN PALS

Jason Sabale
Age: 11 Sex: Male
29 Davison St.
Garfield, NJ 07026
Likes: *Spawn, The Maxx, Death*

Bill Baumann
Age: 18 Sex: Male
3233 Bowman Rdg
St. Charles, MO 63301
Likes: *Scud, Scud, Scud*

Rebecca Tuttle
Age: 13 Sex: Female
422 President Place
West Babylon, NY 11704
Likes: All X-titles, *Catwoman, Spider-Man*

John Bretz
Age: 13 Sex: Male
107 N. Earlton Rd. Ext.
Havre De Grace, MD 21078
Likes: All X-titles, *Wolverine, Grifter*

Brandon Miles
Age: 12 Sex: Male
6612 S. 254 E. Ave.
Broken Arrow, OK 74014
Likes: *Venom, X-Men, Fantastic Four*

Doug Fleming
Age: 28 Sex: Male
8 Dunton St.
Turners Falls, MA 01376
Likes: *Star Wars* titles, X-titles, Spider-titles

Luis Chanco
Age: 14 Sex: Male
647 Manton Ave.
Providence, RI 02909
Likes: *X-Men, Wolverine, Spider-Man*

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TSR #1140
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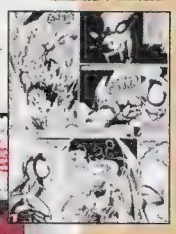
LETTER ART

Fans who get their letter art printed will each receive a copy of *The Maxx #7* signed by Sam Kieth, *Legends of the World's Finest #1* signed by Dan Brereton, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins all that neat stuff, *plus* an original *Amazing Spider-Man* page by the web-shootin' Mark Bagley. Artists: please include a clearly printed return address on the *back* of your envelope. And special thanks to Mark for donatin' that swell Grand Prize!



envelope of the month

NIGHTCRAWLER Shawn Jennings [illegible]

HARLEY QUINN Daniel Holland [illegible]

CATWOMAN Waqas Hussain [illegible]

BURNOUT David Buchanan [illegible]

man. We'll be having a great talk about what's going on in the current issues. Suddenly, a new kid walks into the room. As soon as someone brings up Supes again, we get blasted by "SUPERMAN SUCKS," usually followed by "SPAWN ROCKS." Angered, we can refute these people with about 300 reasons as to why Superman is comics' greatest inventions. Yet their only response is "YOU SUCK."

Okay, okay, the Internet is a forum open to the public, including the fanboys. However, I imagine a lot of these kids read *Wizard,* and I hope they will see what I have to say here: I do not like Spawn, I have little respect for the X-books, and I am a die-hard Superman and DC reader. You kids are entitled to your opinions about what's a good book, but if you're going to put down someone else's opinions, BACK IT UP. You heard me. If you aren't capable of saying more than "YOU SUCK," I suggest you keep your mouth shut. If you're going to pick on DC, make damn sure you've read what they've put out in the past three months.

Adam Frey
Southhampton, PA
Abyssquick@aol.com

I have to agree with you, Adam. I've tried getting online and having real conversations with people and it usually turns into caveman talk. My guess as to why this happens is that some of the kids are pretty young and are at a loss for words (not to mention a possible inability to type fast). Maybe it's just because "online" is still a new form of communication. Hopefully, in time, people will start talking (or typing) in full sentences.

In the meantime, try going on later at night when some of the older fans are online. You have to admit, though, it must be kind of fun for kids to type "YOU SUCK" and get away with it.

Well, that's it! That was fun. Maybe they'll let me do it again sometime. Thanks for the letters. See ya!

Kathy Newman

—Kathy Newman

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GET READY FOR THE ANSWERS!

WildStorm's earth-shattering crossover unfolds in these issues:

MARCH
Sword of Damocles #1
Sigma #1
Deathblow #26
Fire From Heaven #1

APRIL
Backlash #19
Gen[13] #10
WetWorks #16
SormWatch #35
Sigma #2
WildC.A.T.S #29
Deathblow #27

MAY
Backlash #20
Gen[13] #11
WetWorks #17
StormWatch #36
Sigma #3
WildC.A.T.S #30
Deathblow #28
Sword of Damocles #2
Fire From Heaven #2

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HARRIS COMICS

in April!

CYBER-FROG #2

Ben Riley gets stomped!

VAMPIRELLA STRIKES #4

Rudy Returns!

Dynamic art by RUDY NEBRES
(Wizard VAMPIRELLA 1/2)

The beginning of the END...

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PALMIOTTI ◆ RUDE

Vengeance of Vampirella® #25

April 1996

WRAP-AROUND FOIL COVER

by QUESADA & PALMIOTTI

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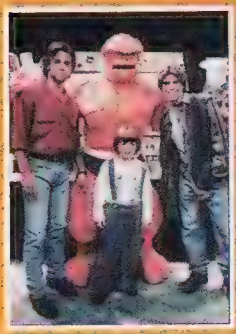
VAMPIRELLA
Sharpens Her Fangs

Valiant takes bold new direction in hopes of sparking reader interest. "Yeah, I'm a fat Bad Girl. Please kill me," pleaded bloated man of the atom.



Jim Lee's revamped Fantastic Four revealed at local con. "We lost Suzie, but we gots those wacky Lawrence kids," exclaimed Thing before breaking down and sobbing, "It's over, it's all over!"

Fan beaten to death outside local con. "He was dressed like a giant wedge of cheese or something. He had it comin'," commented surly fanboy.

Harris Comics' *Vengeance of Vampirella*, arguably responsible for reviving an entire niche of comics known as "Bad Girl" comics in 1993, will come to an end with issue #25. Is this decision based on poor sales and a slumping comics market? Not according to Stewart Morales of Harris Comics.

"Most of today's artists grew up reading *Vampirella* [in its previous incarnation at Warren Comics in the 1970s]. That's an advantage that our competitors do not have. We wanted to retain the edge among our competitors, so we decided to shake the comics up a bit to attract some attention," Morales said.

That final 25th issue will feature a chromium cover by comics' chromium-cover expert Joe Quesada, and will end in a cliffhanger. Then in 1996, the cliffhanger will be resolved in a three-issue mini-series shipping in May entitled *Vampirella: Death and Destruction*. The first issue will feature a cover by Adam Hughes, and the remaining will have covers by Bill Tucci and Joe Jusko.

Also scheduled for 1996 is the *Vampirella 25th Anniversary Special* with a cover by fantasy legend Frank Frazetta, the very artist who painted the cover to the first *Vampirella* #1 in 1969. This special will feature four new stories within the single issue. Morales explains that, as part of the planned shakeup, all the new Vampirella stories will concentrate more strongly on Vampirella as a character, as opposed to her environment and her universe. ■ *Henry Colonna*

ahead

CLAREMONT ON X-MEN?

TARANTINO JOINS BIG!

ELFQUEST RELAUNCHES!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

BIG Deals with Clancy, Tarantino

When names like Quentin Tarantino and Tom Clancy are tossed around, it's usually a BIG deal. And it is.

BIG Entertainment, publishers of Tekno•Comix, will publish a graphic novel this February of *Quentin Tarantino's From Dusk Till Dawn*, the screenwriter/director's new vampire movie. The novel is the first of what BIG officials see as a shift toward that format for more of its comics line. BIG also has signed a "partnership" agreement with best-selling novelist Tom Clancy to create a new "entertainment franchise" to be licensed to various media.

The graphic novel, BIG's first, will be published through its Tekno•Comix imprint. The timing coincides with the release of the movie, which Tarantino wrote and stars in. The plot follows two criminal brothers south of the border, where they become trapped in a Mexican strip bar that is patronized by vampires.

The graphic novel will be edited by BIG's James Chambers and scripted by Ed Polgardy, Tekno's editor-in-chief. Trevor Von Eeden will supply layouts, while Fred Harper does the finished art. The cover features a Dan Brereton painting. Pricing will be in the $4 to $5 range.

By summer, more of the Tekno line will shift to paperback format, including some of the existing books, said Mitchell Rubenstein, BIG's chairman and CEO. "Our comics attract an older, more affluent demographic that prefers that format," he said. Graphic novels will give the company better entry into bookstores as well as improving visibility in comics shops among irregular customers.

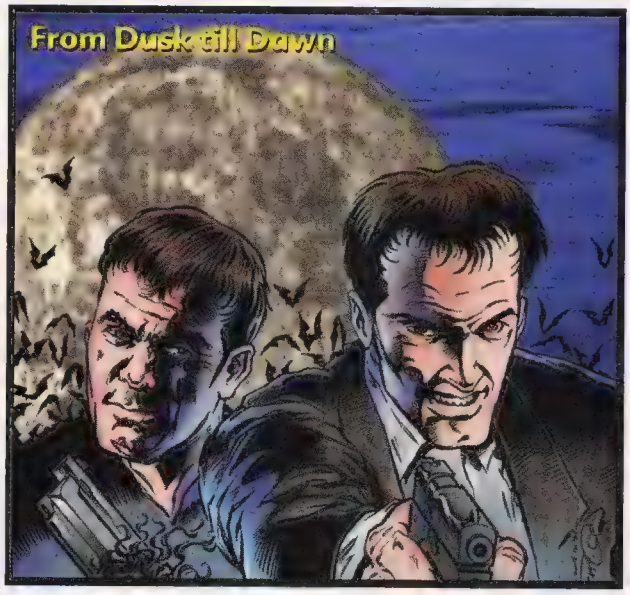
Rubenstein credits Tekno's success to the use of creators' names on the titles, including *Gene Roddenberry's Xander in Lost Universe* and *Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger*. "That pulls in consumers who might not be interested in comics otherwise," he explained.

Rubenstein added that most of the creators are involved, at least in a supervisory role. Gaiman, for example, created the initial concepts and approved selection of creators. Gaiman talks frequently with Jim Vance, his hand-picked choice to write *Mr. Hero*, Rubenstein said. "We solicit his input because we want his support, and it does have his name on it."

The Clancy partnership, called NetCo Partners, plans to release its first project in October 1996, according to Rubenstein. To be known as *Tom Clancy's Net Force*, the concept is set in the year 2025. It features a branch of the FBI staffed by teenage agents who use computer technology to investigate crimes that take place online with computers. The property is a joint effort between Clancy and best-selling author Steve Pieczenik, who collaborated with Clancy on *Tom Clancy's Op Center*.

Plans for *Net Force* include television, movies and toys. Comics plans include graphic novels or regular comics, as well as a "bible" and history of the operation.

Just as this issue went to press, *Wizard* learned that BIG also entered into an agreement with best-selling authors Margaret Weis and Tad Williams. Both authors, known for their fantasy fiction, will be creating entertainment properties for BIG in 1996. More news to come. ■ *Craig Shutt*



Windsor-Smith Tells Stories

The way Barry Windsor-Smith sees it, the turbulent and changing contemporary comics market is a perfect venue for his new creator-owned showcase monthly, *BWS: Storyteller*, scheduled to debut from Dark Horse Comics this summer.

"In many ways, my entire career has been pointing to this moment," he said. "These are stories I've wanted to tell for a long time and, in a period when the tried-and-true in comics seems no longer to be working as well as it once did, I think fans will welcome something that is new and different."

BWS: Storyteller will be a 40-page, large format (9" X 12") omnibus featuring three new series, which will rotate into the cover feature spot from issue to issue. Windsor-Smith will write and draw all three series and the book will be produced by Windsor-Smith Studio.

"The Freebooters" is reminiscent of Windsor-Smith's groundbreaking early work on Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian*, recounting the adventures of young Aran Ana-Kashan, who seeks out Axus the Terrible, reputed to be the greatest warrior of all time and the only man who can save the world from a terrible disaster. "Young Gods" is the story of Heros and Adastra, whose arranged marriage is supposed to establish peace between two pantheons of gods. After Heros is whisked away on the eve of the wedding to a "bachelor party" which lasts a thousand years, he returns to find that war has broken out as a result of his absence. And "The Paradoxman" tells the tale of Tristan Caine, a time-traveler searching through history for his lost love, utilizing a 23rd century children's toy called the Time Bike.

Every issue will also feature production sketches and never-before-published artwork from Windsor-Smith's personal archives, as well as other special features. ■ *Jack Curtin*

Bob Layton is Gone. On Vacation.

In early December, a rumor spread like wildfire around the comic book industry: Bob Layton, Acclaim Comics' editor-in-chief, was gone from the very company he helped build.

"Bob's gone on vacation!" clarified Acclaim Comics' president Steve Massarsky. "He's in Maui. Bob will be back at his desk on Monday!"

"The only way I can figure it," added Acclaim Comics' Senior Vice President Jon Hartz, "is that someone heard that Bob was going, and somehow missed the 'on vacation' part."

The rumor seemed to be based on an e-mail "news release." As posted on America Online, it stated that Layton "was the loser in a power struggle with the company's head honcho Steve Massarsky." While Massarsky did confirm that Layton will be "made something like Creative Director in the near future" and "taken away from the more administrative post of editor-in-chief," he stated that neither Layton nor Acclaim had plans to part company.

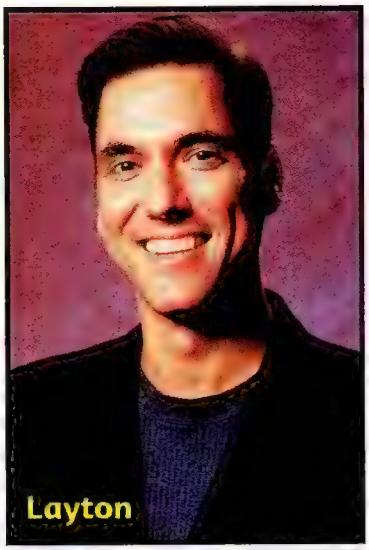


Photo: J. Schuyler

"There was absolutely no [official Acclaim Comics] news release," Massarsky said. "So whatever you read was obviously made up by someone with too much time on their hands, an active imagination and no desire to check their facts."

Massarsky pointed out that most of Acclaim Comics' (formerly Valiant Comics) original personnel were still with the company, including "Jon Hartz, Don Perlin, Bob Layton, Jade, Scott Freidlander, Kevin VanHook, Bob Hall, Mark Moretti, Bart Sears, Tom Ryder and myself!"

"No one ever called me or anyone else to confirm that information," said Hartz, "and I wish they had. I don't mind answering questions like these. I would rather people get their information

When I find F.U.B. I'll be performing a little number called "Death Shrill in E Minor." I hope he enjoys it the first time because nobody gets to hear it twice.

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BY GAMERS, FOR GAMERS

NEWS BITES

Beau Goes Full Time with Spawn

Beau Smith, former director of sales and marketing for Image Comics, has joined the staff of Todd McFarlane Productions as executive director of promotions and public relations.

Smith has been splitting his time between working directly for McFarlane and for Image since 1992. Now he will direct all his energies toward coordinating the various Spawn-related promotions, involving not only the comics but toys and entertainment as well.

Byrne Writes Wonder Woman Novel

"Wonder Woman's very existence has to be an affront to all the truly religious people of the modern world: She was created by the Greek Gods and nobody worships them anymore." That, in his own words, is the basis for John Byrne's forthcoming Wonder Woman novel *Gods and Goddesses*. "The antagonist is a preacher who considers Diana a thing of Satan, for all intents and purposes," he explained.

Byrne said the prose novel came about because DC wanted a Wonder Woman novel to go along with its successful Superman and Batman novels of recent past. "The difference is that this one is entirely original, not based on stuff already done in the comics," he said. The novel is anticipated for a fall release.

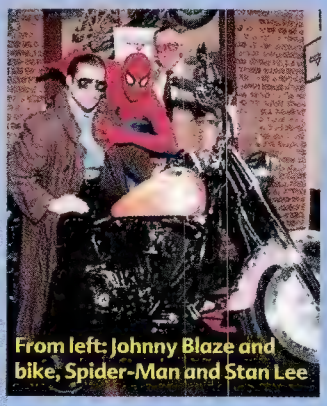
Marvel to Open First Restaurant at Universal Florida

Marvel Comics will open its first themed restaurant—called MarvelMania—in the newly unveiled "E-Zone" at Universal Studios Florida in January 1998.

The E-Zone is based on the success of Universal's City Walk attraction at its Los Angeles site. Among its other attractions will be several other themed restaurants (including a branch of the Hard Rock Cafe), and a production center for E! Entertainment Television.

Ghost Rider Cycle Goes for $27G

In the midst of animation cels and re-created pages from early Marvel comics, a motorcycle designed to look like the monster machine ridden by Ghost Rider was the hit of a November auction at Christie's East. The haunted hog, painted by fan-favorite artist Bill Sienkiewicz, sold for $27,600.



From left: Johnny Blaze and bike, Spider-Man and Stan Lee

Among the other memorabilia sold at the auction were the 1962 Marvel Comics door sign, autographed by Stan Lee and Stan Goldberg (a key colorist and production artist for the company at the time), which went for $483, and several sets of T-shirts and sweat shirts featuring Marvel characters, which sold for prices ranging from $1300 to $1900. ●

Miracleman On the Way Back

Marlowe and Company has come to an agreement with a host of people and publishers that gives it the right to publish the acclaimed comic *Miracleman*. *Miracleman* was formerly published by the now-defunct Eclipse Comics and has been trapped in legal limbo for years.

The agreement gives Marlowe and Company the rights to all of the Miracleman material both published and unpublished. "We will be going back and reprinting the graphic novels that Eclipse did, albeit with new covers and hopefully better color resolution," said Lawrence Deneault, Marlowe's managing editor and editor of the graphic novel line. Deneault was unsure when the reprints would be released.

Miracleman was originally written by Alan Moore and then passed on to writer Neil Gaiman and artist Mark Buckingham. The series was stopped short, however, when Eclipse Comics went bankrupt in 1992. The rights to *Miracleman* were divided between the bankruptcy trustee and Gaiman and Buckingham. "Marlowe and Company has reached an agreement with Gaiman and Buckingham regarding their share and right now we're waiting for the final bankruptcy auction for the remaining shares from the bankruptcy trustee," Deneault said.

Marlowe and Company's success with its recent *Sam and Max* graphic novel led them in search of *Miracleman* to spearhead their graphic novel line. "*Miracleman* is just too good of a comic to let fall between the cracks. I also needed a series that would act as the core of Marlowe's graphic novel line, and *Miracleman* was perfect," said Deneault.

Will there be any new issues of *Miracleman* in the future? "I don't know when or *if* any new *Miracleman* material will be released," Deneault said. "Neil and Mark are very interested in continuing the series, but it's a long way off and Neil's going to be extremely busy for the foreseeable future." ■ *David Borak*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• And what about those rumors of Chris Claremont returning to write the X-Men? Claremont has said there has been no official offer. Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras said he's happy with the current X-team, but made Claremont an offer to do an undisclosed one-shot project. But, Harras says, the door has been open for Claremont "to come back and do whatever he wants."

• Dan Jurgens told Buzz that he'll spin his final web on *The Sensational Spider-Man* with #6. "There was a difference of opinion between me and the editorial staff over the direction of the character and the book," Jurgens said.

• Jim Lee told Buzz he's planning on returning to *WildC.A.T.s* in '96 with issue #29. He'll be doing layouts while Richard Bennett will ink his work.

• Buzz has learned of plans for a four-issue all-Image crossover this summer written by Alan Moore with art by Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld and others.

• Is *Astro City* under martial law? Maybe, as Buzz hears that the title is going on an extended hiatus to look for another publisher. Busiek had no comment.

• *Thor* and *Incredible Hulk* canceled? While Marvel said the future of both titles is uncertain, the titles will stay on the schedule until a decision is made.

Elfquest Breaks from its Cocoon

Like a butterfly emerging, the world of *Elfquest* publishing is about to undergo a metamorphosis. At least that's how WaRP Graphics president Richard Pini describes it.

"Last year, as we were tooling up the schedule for the end of '95 and beginning of '96, we realized that—with just a little bit of tweaking—all of our current series would conclude within a month or so of each other," Pini explained. "Given all the gyrations the comics market has gone through, I don't think it is right that we just do Elfquest business as usual. We have the chance to go from one stage to the next, from caterpillar to butterfly."

In fact, the scientific word for that change—*Metamorphosis*—is the title of the one-shot that will launch the next phase of Elfquest. It'll be a larger-than-normal comic, featuring a look backward and a look forward. "We're looking at 48 pages now; it could go to 64," Pini said. "Maybe a third of that will be devoted to the Elfquest-that-was, so that anyone can jump on and learn the history." Pini adds that the book will also have unpublished art by his wife and Elfquest co-creator Wendy Pini, including concept art, designs and unused character sketches.

The other two-thirds, he adds, "will be where we go from here leading to a pair of anthologies and a main series."

Although final titles for the two anthologies have not been determined, Pini refers to them as "Elfquest Light" and "Elfquest Dark."

"We have always had stories that were light and stories that were dark. Ember is a 'light' character, for instance; Winnowill and Rayek are 'dark' characters—although each of them have their other sides. The 'Worldpool' sort of 'What if?' stories tend to be dark in nature and tone."

In addition, there will be a regular Elfquest title that continues the story of the main Elfquest cast—the Wolfriders and company

Look for *Metamorphosis* in April. The new main Elfquest tale and the two anthologies will begin in May. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

company updates

AC COMICS

In March, the "Golden Age Greats" series continues with *Mystery Men* #1, a 44-page reprint of work by Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin.

ACCLAIM COMICS

Acclaim has acquired the license to produce comics based on the TV series "Sliders" for its Armada imprint. Look for the first issue in February.

ARCHIE COMICS

It's a milestone when *Jughead Jones Digest* hits #100 in February, featuring the truth about ... the Jughead *imposter*?!? The shocking two-part story is one of many tales in this $2.75 book. ... Thanks to major fan demand, those "jawsome" Street Sharks are scoring their own ongoing series beginning in February, written by Evan Skolnick (*New Warriors*) and drawn by Nelson Ortega (*Spectacular Spider Man*).

BLACKOUT COMICS

High Voltage #0 premieres in March, promising big guns and over-the-top, "compin', stompin', rollickin'" action. The 32-page issue features writing by Mike Baron.

BONGO COMICS

Springfield goes on a hesitant health kick in March's *Simpsons Comics* #18, as McBain forces everyone to take part in the Presidential Fitness Program.

CHAOS! COMICS

Mike Deodato Jr. does Lady Death? It's true—a huge poster by the hot *Thor* and *Glory* artist ships for a cool $5.95 in March.

CLAYPOOL COMICS

Soulsearchers #17 presents a long-awaited family reunion, with Madame Bernice—who's plotted against the Soulsearchers and is Bridget's mother—in the center. This black-and-white issue by Peter David, Richard Howell and Dave Cockrum ships in April for $2.50.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

Crusade expands in May with *Atomic Angels*, a new series about a group of four biologically enhanced teenagers. Part of a government experiment in which they're implanted with a string of bacteria that shields them from nuclear radiation, they go on missions to investigate and bring to justice some corrupt nuclear-related companies. ... Shi dons a spiffy new costume in that month's *Shi* #8, as her sister Tomoe comes close to discovering Shi's secret identity.

DC COMICS

The theme for DC's 1996 Annuals is "Legends of the Dead Earth," where all the stories will take place in a post-apocalyptic alternate future.

EVENT COMICS

If ya like Ash, make sure to check out the *Ash* #0 limited-edition lithograph shipping in February. Limited to just 1,200 copies, these puppies are signed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, come with a certificate of authenticity and are yours for $29.95 a pop.

HARRIS COMICS

Vengeance of Vampirella #23 sports a killer cover by Glenn Fabry (known for his *Preacher* covers) and unleashes a major new foe for Vampi. It ships in February for $2.95. ... Don't miss the Vampirella Photo Poster that same month—it's a 17" X 24" job starring the popular model, for just $5.95.

Vengeance of Vampirella #23

HIGH IMPACT STUDIOS

The company will be releasing a chromium card set—starring its main heroines, China and Jazz, and several other characters—through Comic Images in August. It'll offer the visual energy of the *Heavy Metal* magazine, and will include several pieces from March's *Lingerie Special*, re-presented in shiny chromium.

IMAGE COMICS

• CARTOON BOOKS

Congrats to Jeff Smith and Co. for *Bone*'s

continued on page 23

Lights on Broadway

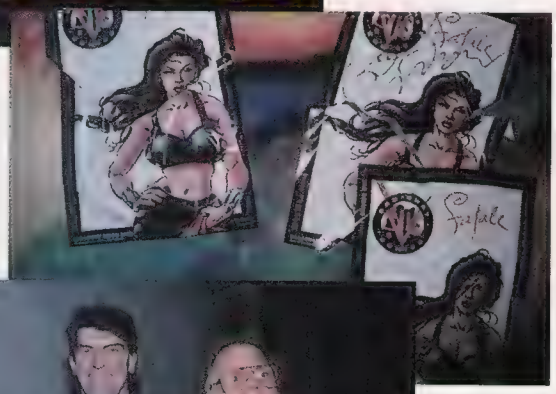
One bite of the Vegetarian California Roll and you knew this wasn't your average comic book launch party.

When Jim Shooter's Broadway Comics hosted its launch party at Manhattan's New York Prop Gallery recently, the event took on the feel of a Hollywood movie premiere.

The Broadway Comics logo shone onto the sidewalk in front of the main door with the help of a special spotlight. A large model of the Chrysler Building with a car tangled in its spire (showcasing the opening scene of Broadway's first book *Powers that Be*) hung from the upstairs ceiling, through a large opening into the first floor.

L. to r. Eric Ellenbogen, Jim Shooter and John Engelman

The walls were splattered with graffiti, along with several pics of Broadway Comics' character Fatale in her infamous "come and get me" pose. Among the phrases splashed on the walls were "Fatale is lump," "Jar of Fools Rules" (referring to the popular small press series), "Koo-Koo-Kachoo," "Big Brother is watching," "O.J.!! NO WAY!!!," and in several places, "Stan is the Man."



And what would a launch party be without a celebrity? Broadway Comics' resident celeb was "Saturday Night Live" producer Lorne Michaels, who owns Broadway Video, the proud sponsor of this new comic venture.

Guests munched on hors d'oeuvres off waiter-carried trays that sported miniature versions of New York City landmarks like the Chrysler Building and the Statue of Liberty. One of the highlights of the evening was the semi-life-size cardboard standee of Fatale—Broadway's premier heroine—which people could stand next to for free Polaroid memories.

L. to r. Chris Claremont, Jim Shooter and Don Perlin

Among the quotables from the evening:

Joseph A. James (executive editor of Broadway Comics): "We want an open-door policy with the comic book industry and with the non-comic world—people who don't read comics."

Ellie Shooter (Jim's mom): "Broadway Comics has a great future. [Jim] has loved this business since he was 13. He's motivated by his love of comic books."

Nick Scoullar (the 16-year-old host of "The Anti-Gravity Room" TV show on the Sci-Fi Channel): "It's a great party. Hope they don't lose their good characters in the coming years [like "SNL" did]. Meeting Lorne Michaels was a highlight."

Chris Claremont (writer of *Sovereign Seven*): "I hope the company does as well as the party. It's good to have new competition [in the field]."

Rick Parker (artist of the *Beavis & Butt-Head* comic): "This was the best place to be on Tuesday, Nov. 28th, 1995. Beavis and Butt-Head would say, 'It was cool!' I have admiration for Jim Shooter; he has weathered many storms and believes firmly in himself and what he's doing."

Jim Salicrup (Topps Comics editor-in-chief): "Anytime I get to see Jim Shooter's mom, it's great. She's like the 'Dave Letterman's mom' of comics."

Jim Shooter (Broadway Comics editor-in-chief): "I'm very comfortable. [Some of] the writers on 'Saturday Night Live' have been reading my stuff since *Legion of Super-Heroes*.

"There are few women writers in comics. We have two women writers: Pauline Weiss and Janet Jackson. They're fair judges; if we ever slip up, they'll let us know. They give the woman's point of view." ■ *John B. Lacey (with additional reporting by Marc Wilkofsky)*

BYTE THIS!

• WildStorm's *DefCon 4* writer Jeff Mariotte and artist Matt Broome visit Wizard World on America Online on February 22 @ 7:00-7:45 p.m. (EST). Mariotte appears again with *Fire from Heaven* writer Jonathan Peterson on March 22 @ 9:00-9:45 p.m. (EST). WildStorm fans shouldn't miss these events because clues to WildStorm's "online scavenger hunt" will be announced during these chats.

• Lady Death creators Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes preview the new *Lady Death: Odyssey* mini-series on March 29 @ 8:00-8:45 p.m. (EST). Wizard World also has exclusive cover and interior art previews in the download library. We will also be giving away prizes of signed comics, premium editions and other goodies.

To get hooked up to Wizard World on America Online, call 800-754-4400. They'll send you free software and 10 hours free online time. Keyword: Wizard. ■ *Buddy Scalera*

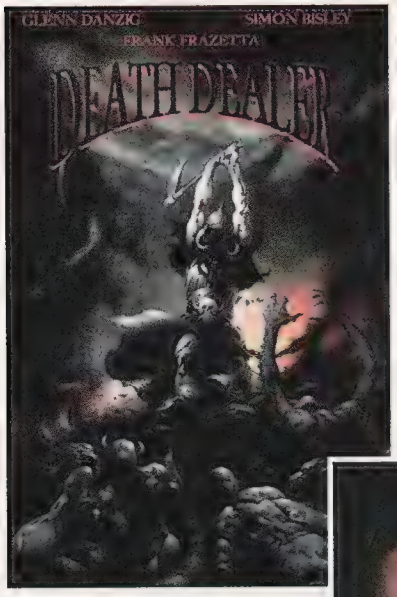
SHARP-SHOOTER HANDLES DEATH DEALER

Liam Sharp is working on what is a dream project for him. Replacing Simon Bisley, Sharp becomes the regular artist on Verotik's *Death Dealer* beginning in mid-spring, when the second issue of the ultra-violent series written by Glenn Danzig—established rock star as well as publisher/editor-in-chief of Verotik—is scheduled for release.

Sharp, a British artist best known for his recent penciling stint on Marvel Comics' *Incredible Hulk*, spoke of his enthusiasm for the comic. "Obviously, the main exciting thing for me was to be working with Frank Frazetta," who created the vengeful barbarian character for which the series was named, "and also following Simon, who I'm a big fan of as well."

Simon Bisley left the book when he realized it didn't fit into his schedule. As Verotik's Managing Editor Steven Wardlaw explained, "We really loved his art on it, but we just wanted to get it out on a schedule of at least twice a year," a task Bisley didn't have time for. Sharp began work for Verotik last year with a three-issue mini-series entitled *G.O.T.H.* (an acronym for Government Operation Total Hate), which was also written by Danzig. A longtime fan of Sharp's work, Danzig was eager to hire the artist.

While Danzig handles the main writing chore on *Death Dealer*, Frazetta has a great amount of input into the story and helps guide the book in terms of the parameters of the characters. "Frazetta is someone I've always wanted to meet," said Sharp, adding with a laugh, "I hope I'm not too fanboyish when I talk to him; I expect to be stuttering like an idiot."



Although Sharp enjoyed his time at Marvel, he doesn't plan on returning to the mainstream anytime soon. "The strange thing is, I found myself in a mainstream audience by chance; I had no idea it was ever going to happen. It was an excellent time and it did me a hell of a lot of good, but I never really had any dreams of doing mainstream at all. I had always wanted to do stuff like [fantasy illustrator] Richard Corben, like Frazetta, and that whole genre of *Heavy Metal*-type magazines for a more mature audience."

Liam Sharp

Work with Verotik, a company well known for its controversial comics aimed at adults, is indeed different from typical mainstream stuff. Sharp looks forward to *Death Dealer*, the saga of a warrior who merges with an ancient barbarian spirit on a quest for revenge. "It's right up my street. It's the kind of strip I always wanted to draw. And, again, just to work with Frazetta is something else entirely." ■ *Dean Simakis*

company updates

continued from page 21

nomination as best new foreign book at France's Angoulême convention.

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT

Savage Dragon #26 features the end to the bloodiest battle you'll ever see, as nearly every bad guy ever to grace this comic's pages makes an appearance. Check it out in February.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

The first issue of *Deft'on 4* will feature four different covers, with the most common by the regular art team of Mat Broome and Edwin Rosell. The rarer variant covers will be penciled by Jim Lee, Michael Golden and Humberto Ramos.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

Look for a bold barrage of crossovers from LNS in 1996, including Razor and Warrior Nun Areola (of Antarctic Press), Poizon and Nira X (of Entity), and Stryke and Double Impact (of High Impact Studios).

MALIBU COMICS

Artist Norm Breyfogle returns to Prime in March's *Prime/Captain America* one-shot. After that, the artist is slated to return to his old stomping grounds for six issues of the ongoing *Prime*.

MARVEL COMICS

Lobo artist Val Semeiks will be penciling *Wolverine #99* and *#101*, as well as an upcoming issue of *X-Man*.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT

The classic *Dawn #1* cover is presented again in the full-color Dawn Poster #3, a sharp-looking February release. It's a whopping 22" X 34", for $5.95.

TEKNO•COMIX

Learn all about that wacky Tekno Universe in the *Tekno•Comix Handbook*. This March one-shot includes original sketches and character designs from all of Tekno's titles. . . . *Wheel of Worlds* becomes an ongoing series of specials this March, with issue #1 centering around Tekno's super-feminist Lady Justice.

Paradise

Terry Moore rejects stereotyping and labeling for relationships and complex characters in *Strangers in Paradise*

Terry Moore hates labels. His comic *Strangers in Paradise* has readers wondering if it's a mystery, adventure, comedy or soap opera. It simply can't be categorized—and that's just the way Moore likes it.

"When I started to write it, I wanted to avoid anything formulaic," Moore says in his barely noticeable Texan drawl. "Readers think they can figure it out quick: Two chicks, maybe a lesbian affair, maybe a threesome with the guy, basic soap opera. But if you read it, you see the real story is what's underneath any of that stuff."

The real story behind *Strangers in Paradise* began in 1993 when a three-issue *SiP* mini-series introduced readers to the series' stars: Francine, her roommate and best friend Katchoo, and David. Katchoo hates men (and has strong feelings for Francine), while David is hanging around because he's falling in love with Katchoo (who doesn't hate David so much). In the mini-series, Francine had a nervous breakdown after being dumped by her pig boyfriend, which ticked off the revenge-seeking Katchoo. But that lighthearted sex-farce ended when the ongoing title began and was replaced with intrigue, violence and a mystery that enveloped Katchoo's dark past.

Now that too is over, the 41-year-old says, with the eighth issue. "With the epilogue to the story [in issue #9, out in January], we're out of there, babe. In 1996, I'm going to be focusing on the three characters' relationships and domestic life. The reader response has been good, and that storyline was a great way to learn about the characters. But I don't want this to be an adventure comic. It's really about people."

More specifically, he admits, it's about women. "If you boiled down women to two types, these might be the two," Moore says. "That's a very simplistic way of looking at it, and it's not a safe statement by any means. But this really is a story of two women dealing with today, and the bottom line is that men are not welcome. These women love and hate and fail and succeed and plan their lives, and for the most part, it's happening without men." Even the villains and their helpers, he points out, are women.

This approach came from his "knee-jerk reaction to all the man-bashing that was so severe in the media," he explains. "After taking as much as I could take, I wrote the mini-series to show where it leads if all men are pigs." The result was a comedy of romantic errors, "a sitcom based on sex, like a Neil Simon play."

When he began the ongoing series, however, his attitude changed. "I was embarrassed that I'd gone for the easy laugh in the mini-series," he says. "I knew I could do better. I fell in love with the characters and respected them, and I wanted to show there were more sides to them than a bitch blonde and a helpless brunette."

Moore may have taken the dramatic tone a bit too far with the ongoing series, though. "I saw a lot of books selling huge amounts, and I thought maybe mine was boring," he says. "So I decided to spice it up. The next thing I knew, I was stuck with this adventure story, and it's not the main story I want to tell. I'm sharing the same curiosity as the readers about the relationship among these three characters."

He admits that he knows "who ends up with whom and their basic life turns. But I haven't worked out everything like a chess master. Every time I try to do that, they don't listen to what I tell them to do." Both women, and David too, are equally drawn from him, he adds. "I'm just as naive and sensitive as Francine, but I get just as mad as Katchoo," he says. "They both fascinate me."

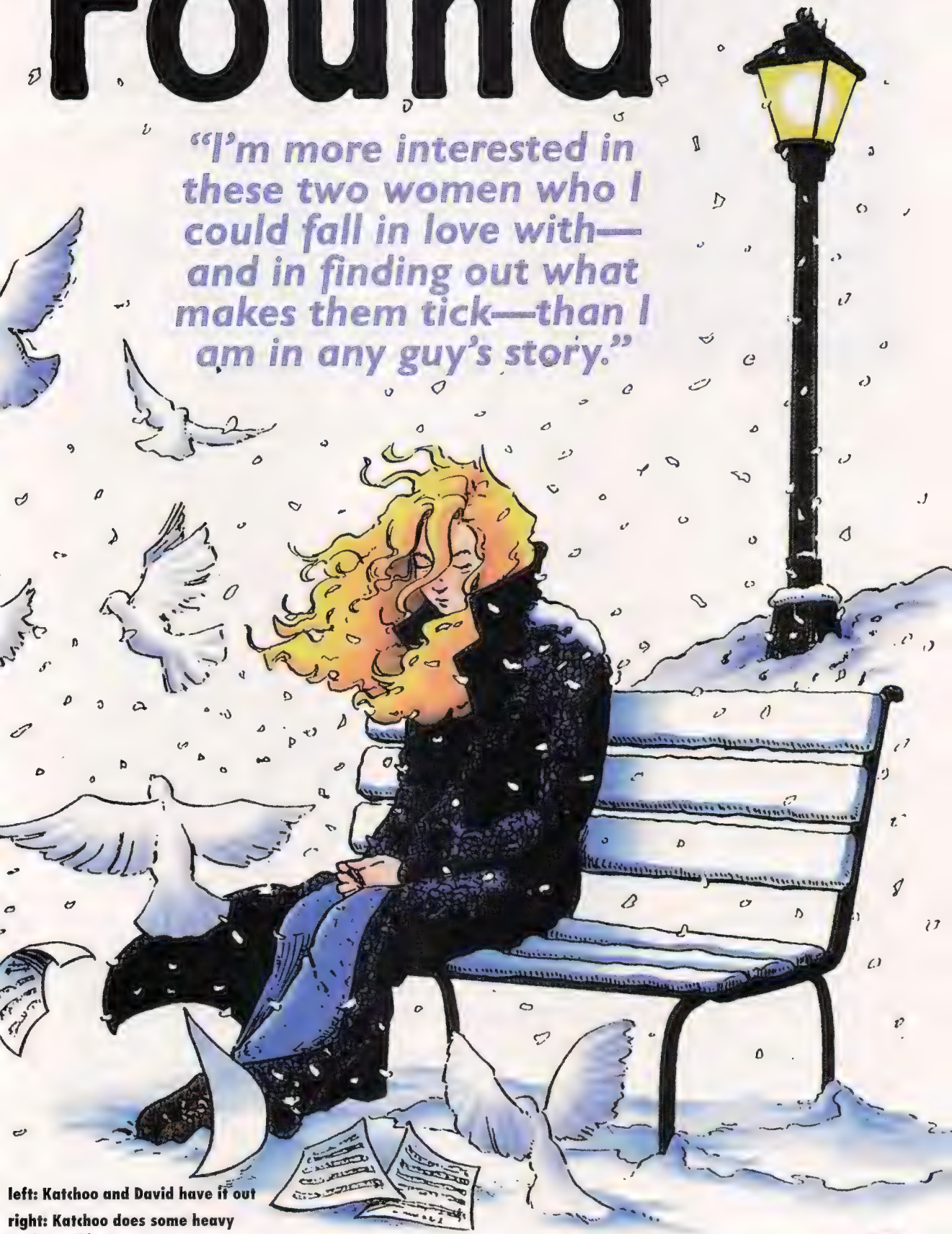
Early reader concerns that a male creator couldn't realistically write two female leads have died down, he notes. "I don't claim to be an expert on women or to even know what I'm writing about," he laughs. "I'm just a lot more interested in these two women who I could fall in love with—and in finding out what makes them tick—than I am in any guy's story."

Francine, the helpless brunette, was given a "nonglamorous" name to fit her style. The mini-series took shape in Moore's mind around the image of Francine stripping naked and cavorting in a public fountain. From there, he worked back to determine what created that state of mind. Francine's emotional outlook hasn't improved much in the ongoing series, at the beginning of which she'd gained

By Craig Shutt

Found

"I'm more interested in these two women who I could fall in love with—and in finding out what makes them tick—than I am in any guy's story."



left: Katchoo and David have it out

right: Katchoo does some heavy soul searching

READERS IN PARADISE

Moore has big plans for *Strangers in Paradise* — and for his career. The first nine issues of the ongoing series will be reprinted in a trade paperback in February.

He also has two assignments for DC's Vertigo imprint with the new ongoing *The Dreaming* title. One is a one-shot and the other is a longer story arc, but neither is scheduled. "I won't try to ape Neil Gaiman [who created the concept], I'll just try to write a people story."

A magnum opus, an action/adventure/romance/fantasy tale called *Diamond of Time*, is on hold for now, he says. It's the story of a regular guy who continues to have these unconnected dreams. They start to break his heart, though, when he falls in love with a vaguely familiar woman who continues to show up in his dreams. But when he finally realizes her name, he completely vanishes off the face of the Earth. Then the story *really* takes off from there…"I didn't do it first, because I consider it to have a lot of layers, and I have to be good to pull it off. I'm not drawing or writing as well as I'd like to, and I want to learn more before I do that. I'm still very much a sophomore in this business." ■CS

about 25 pounds.

"I confess: I have a real weakness for brunettes who aren't skinny," Moore laughs. "I can't stand that skinny-skinny, aerobic-workout model look. I wanted Francine to be more my idea of the normal American girl next door that you fall in love with. Everyone knows someone who's weight varies up or down depending on whether they're happy or whether extra weight bothers them. I resent the pressure America puts on women to look like Cindy Crawford. She isn't someone I'd want to marry."

Francine should have been the star of the mini-series, he says, "but Katchoo kind of took over." Katchoo's nebulous sexual status generated a smattering of mail, but it doesn't come up much these days, he says. "Katchoo gets a tremendous amount of acceptance among readers for whatever she is, even though nobody knows what she is. That's the point. Life is more complicated than choosing option A or B. People are more complex than that."

That complexity ensures that readers don't label the characters, he says. "People label others because they're lazy or it makes them more comfortable. But the weirdest, wildest people I've known look like accountants. I look like an accountant myself, but inside, I'm not that way at all. I have a small anti-establishment streak in me. Okay, it's a huge streak. Actually, it's a five-lane highway."

It's no surprise then that this soft-spoken father of two spent the first 10 years after high school playing lead guitar in hard-rock bands to support his wife, Robyn, whom he married in 1975, and his daughter Amy, who is now in college. "It was a lot of fun, and it really influenced me," he says. "I have a lot of music around me and I still think about it a lot." He's included song lyrics in his stories and often lists the music he listened to while creating the comic. "Life is a multi-media experience, and comics should be that way too."

One lyric has been put to music by a fan, and Moore hopes to let readers hear more such compositions. But they won't be created by him. "When I stopped playing music, I stopped cold," he says. "But the world is opening up to me, and I have more options now. Finding a way to put these lyrics to music on tape or CD-ROMs or on the Internet is definitely on my mind."

Moore's only formal art training came from an animation and cartooning course given by Dick Ruhl of the Disney Studio. "I planned to become an animator, but the pay was really low [in the early 1980s]." When his son, Trey, was born in 1982, he gave up rock music, settled down and became a film editor. A Dallas native, the creator now lives in Houston.

Becoming a comic strip creator was always in the forefront of Moore's mind, and in the late 1980s he talked with a number of syndicators. "I got as close as you can get to producing one, but we never launched it because I lost my motivation," he says. "I was playing with ideas for gag-a-day strips, but the more I did, the more I realized I had the hots to tell a story about characters I could relate to."

So he let it simmer in his brain until 1991, when he had an epiphany. "I turned 37 and realized that I could go my entire life without ever doing this," he says. "It scared the hell out of me. I was desperate to tell my stories."

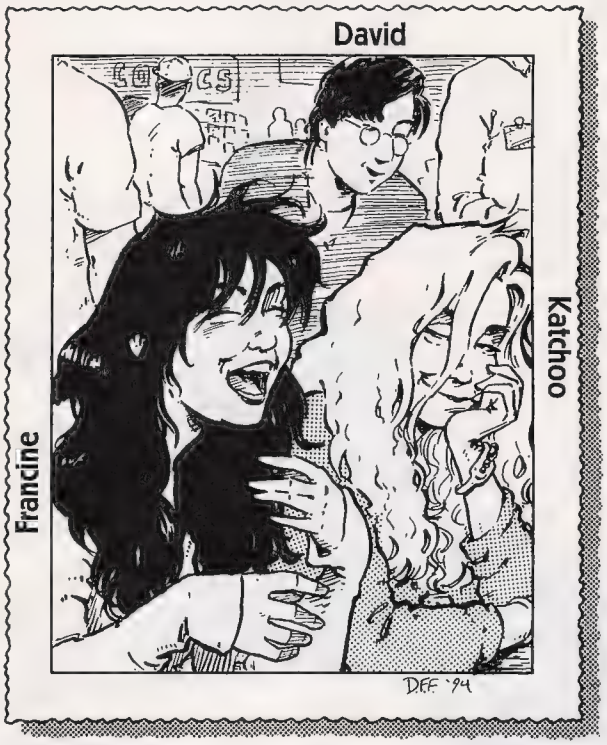
He's tried experiments such as a four-color dream section in issue #2 ("my tip of the hat to my animation background"), as well as text story pages and unconnected text stories. "I've decided to stop putting my ideas down in sketchbooks and put them into the comics instead."

The book has been critically and commercially well received. He was nominated for four Eisner awards and two Harvey awards this year, and sales continue to grow impressively in a bear market. This past summer, he quit his film editing job to become a full-time comics creator. "My career is being handed to me on a plate," he says. "I'm really fortunate."

The artist is considering going monthly, and he'll test the four-color waters later this year with a one-time full-color issue, colored by cover colorist Quinn Supplee of Olyoptics. "I'd love to do those things, but right now, I'm still doing everything on the book," he explains. "I have to work really hard to keep my head above water. It's very easy to go about the business of being a self-publisher and never actually sit down and produce the comic."

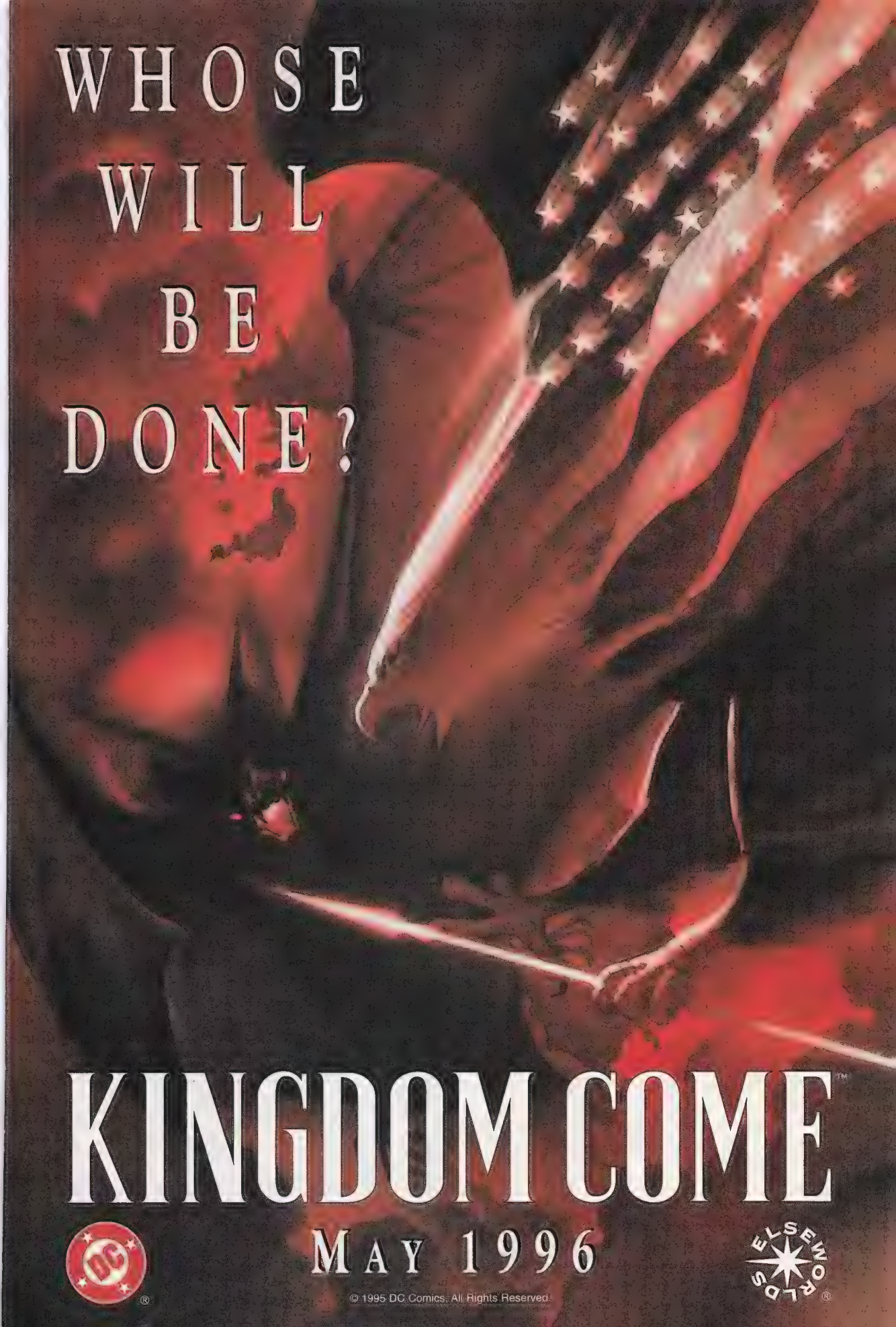
Even so, he has no desire to lose his self-publishing status, despite some tempting "creator-friendly" offers this past summer. "The changes in the distribution field haven't scared me, because I'm treated like a golden child," he says. He also thinks he's positioned well for the coming years. "I've really benefited from the changing tastes of readers that occurred in 1995 away from superheroes and to the independent comics."

His optimism for the future is based on an even stronger point as well. "I know what's coming next in the book," he says. "And it's so much better than what's gone before. Last year was really only an introduction. I'm just now figuring out what I can do with this book. I've laid the groundwork, and I know this isn't my best shot yet."



The heart has its reasons, that reason cannot know.

Craig Shutt, who talked with the creators of Preacher *in* Wizard *#54, thinks poor David may be in over his head.*


WHOSE
WILL
BE
DONE?
KINGDOM COME™
MAY 1996

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FIRST LOOK

THE DREAMING

VERTIGO EXPLORES SANDMAN CONCEPTS IN *THE DREAMING*

ALISA KWITNEY, AS EDITOR OF *THE DREAMING*, SEES HER ASSIGNMENT AS A SPLENDID OPPORTUNITY.

"*The Dreaming*," she says, "is vaster and more diverse than we have yet seen it to be. I hope to attract some of the most interesting and creative people in comics to tell stories set within its boundaries."

Part of DC's Vertigo imprint, *The Dreaming* is a monthly title that DC hopes will fill the void left by the conclusion of its popular *Sandman* book after 75 issues. Acting as a spinoff of writer Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, *The Dreaming*'s format is such that different creative teams will do story arcs a number of issues in length.

Terry Laban, known for his creator-owned *Cud* for Dark Horse Comics, has written the initial three-issue story. He acknowledges that his selection for the job will strike some as decidedly offbeat, laughing, "I guess I am a pretty strange choice."

Kwitney explains that Laban's "wonderfully bizarre sense of humor" lends itself well to the new book. "I needed a special kind of story for the first one, a story that used some of the familiar characters from *The Sandman* and gave a sense of the range of possibilities in the Dreaming, yet had a different tone than Neil Gaiman's work. Neil had given me the germ of an idea a long time ago—what might happen if Goldie the gargoyle became disenchanted with the dysfunctional relationship between Cain and Abel and ran away? And Terry just took that and developed it into a wonderful story."

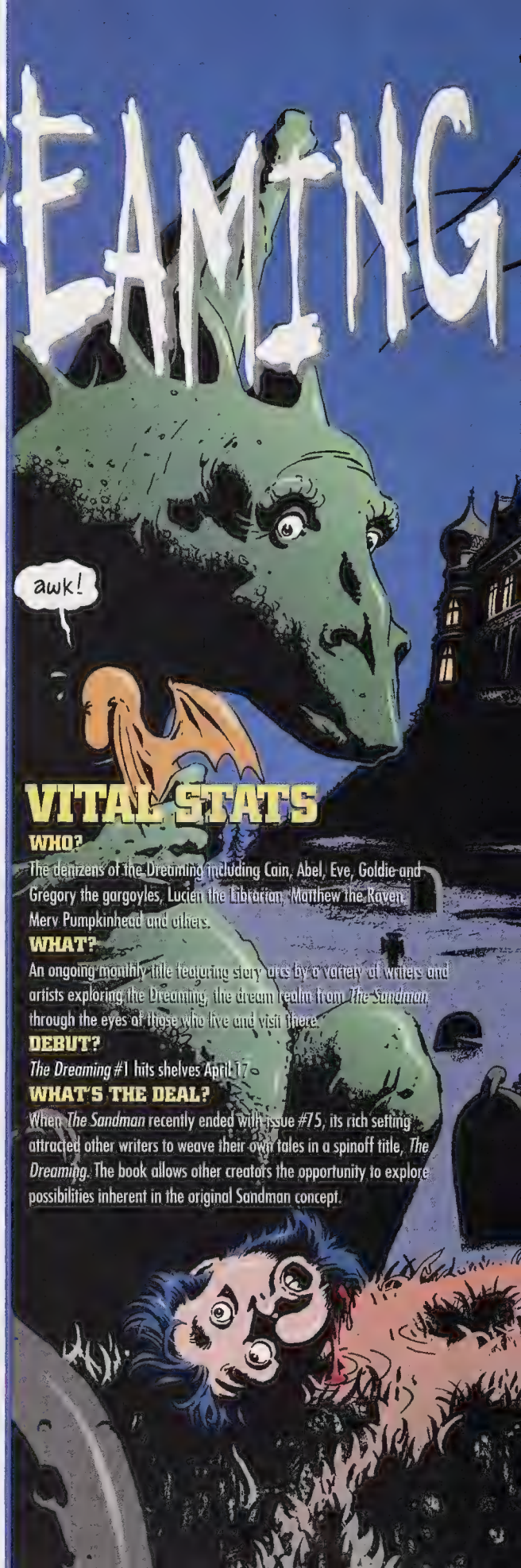
In "The Goldie Factor," illustrated by Danish *wunderkind* Peter Snejbjerg, the quarrelsome brothers follow the runaway gargoyle through the Dreaming, establishing a roadmap of sorts for future storytellers. "Goldie hooks up with a character who turns out to be the snake in the Garden of Eden," Laban says. "The big payoff comes with the revelation at the end of the story that she has a very special power which affects the entire Dreaming."

British writer Peter Hogan will script the second, four-part story arc, with art by Steve Parkhouse, and countryman Bryan Talbot is writing a three-part story to follow that, which Dave Taylor will pencil.

"*The Sandman* benefited greatly from having different artists bring their own sensibilities to the characters and stories Neil Gaiman was telling," Kwitney says, "and I believe that letting various writer/artist teams explore different aspects of the Dreaming will generate the same sort of excitement."

Jack Curtin, who interviewed Dale Keown in Wizard *#52, hopes never to be caught in a spat between Cain and Abel.*

BY JACK CURTIN



VITAL STATS

WHO?
The denizens of the Dreaming including Cain, Abel, Eve, Goldie and Gregory the gargoyles, Lucien the Librarian, Matthew the Raven, Merv Pumpkinhead and others.

WHAT?
An ongoing monthly title featuring story arcs by a variety of writers and artists exploring the Dreaming, the dream realm from *The Sandman*, through the eyes of those who live and visit there.

DEBUT?
The Dreaming #1 hits shelves April 17

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
When *The Sandman* recently ended with issue #75, its rich setting attracted other writers to weave their own tales in a spinoff title, *The Dreaming*. The book allows other creators the opportunity to explore possibilities inherent in the original Sandman concept.

cut here for a choice little poster

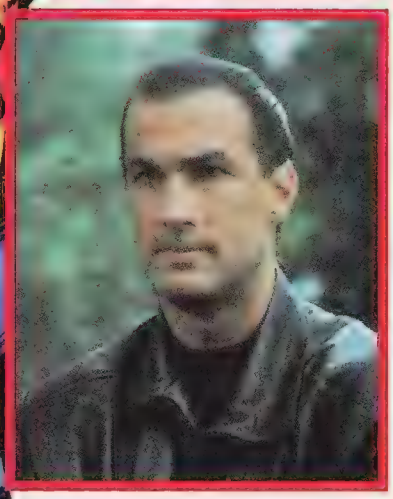
Wizard casts the X-Factor movie!

Casting Call 13

We cast mutants already in our very first "Casting Call" over a year ago, but we've yet to wander around the rest of the X-Universe. So what the heck? We'll cast an X-Factor flick, because the team is lookin' pretty cool these days, teaming up X-villains with good guys. Sounds neat to us. So...wanna see what we'd do with this movie? C'mon, let's go!

MYSTIQUE

Hot off her "Goldeneye" performance, Famke Janssen would play one wicked blue-faced shapeshifter.



FORGE

Karate guru Steven Seagal ("Under Siege") would excellently portray the Native American mutant inventor. (And don't say Seagal's too old—Forge's a Vietnam vet!)

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

SABRETOOTH

We cast Clancy Brown ("Highlander") as Sabretooth in *Wizard* #41's "Casting Call." He's still so perfect, we're stickin' to our guns on this one.

POLARIS

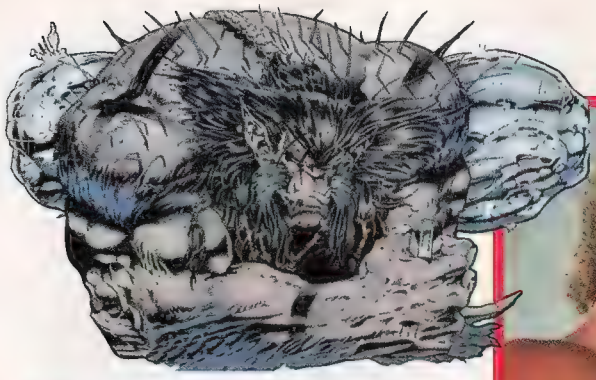
Victoria's Secret model Stephanie Seymour doesn't need Polaris' magnetic powers to attract anyone enough to accept her in this role.

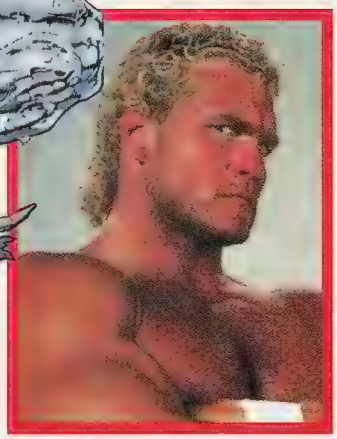
WILDCHILD

Wiseguy Steve Buscemi ("Reservoir Dogs," "Desperado") has that thin, bony face to do this wild man justice.

SHARD

Jasmine Guy ("Harlem Nights," "A Different World") would be pretty darn good as Bishop's kid sister. Just dye her hair blonde and we're all set.



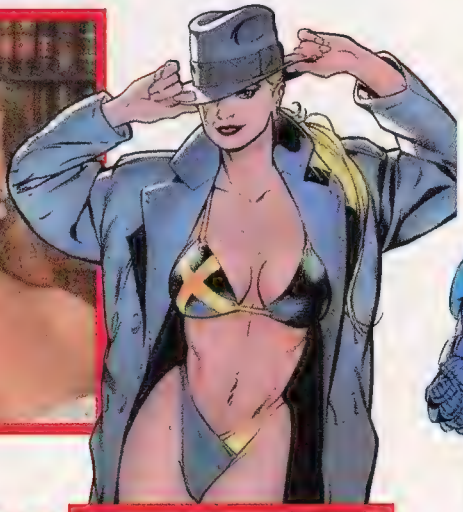


DARK BEAST

We need a big, bulky guy who could be the nasty gray Beast. So why not WWF wrestler Sid? We'd get a good makeup artist to polish him off.

VAL COOPER

The no-nonsense government liaison of X-Factor has "Batman" co-star Kim Basinger's name all over her.

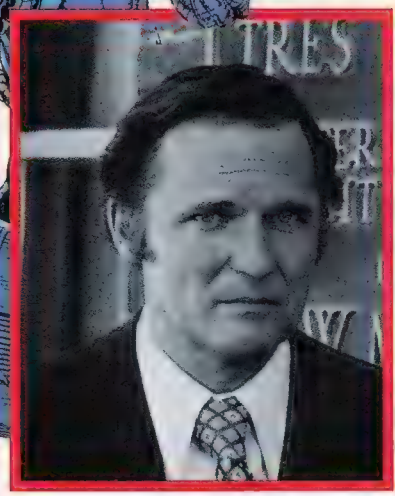


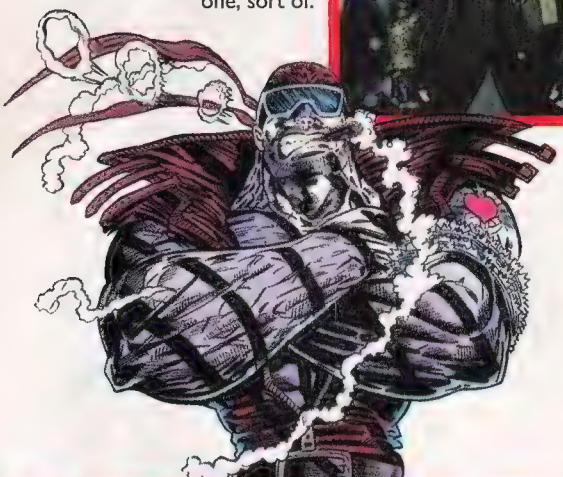
APOCALYPSE

We'd get those ILM guys to use computer imaging effects for Apocalypse's hulking body. The great voice of John Vernon ("Animal House") would be spectacular as this evil mutant.

RANDOM

So what if Brian Bosworth ("Stone Cold") can't play pro football no more? It gives him more time to do movies with mindless violence. Like this one, sort of.





So there you go. Another fairy tale X-flick for X-fans everywhere to demand and crave. If you're wondering why you don't see Havok…well, if you read the book, you'd know why. (That's a hint, folks. Ain't we stinkers?) It's too bad Hollywood just seems to be falling over backwards to copy the latest big hit film like "Die Hard with a Vengeance," and not interested in doing anything remotely original. Too bad for them—a movie like this would be kinda cool. W

The Wizard *staff is into leather big-time.*

"THE NEXT GEN IS HERE!"
COMICS READER
TASK
PSILENCE
RUBBLE
FUSION
SEOUL
WYLDER
BLOODPOOL #1
PATRICK LEE
"Bloodpool gets a vote of approval, especially if Pat Lee is determined to stay with the book for awhile."
-COMICS READER
JO DUFFY
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The Art of the Deal

Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld return to the doors of Marvel Comics in the name of fun

Just so you don't lose any sleep over this, Jim Lee wants to make something clear.

"Obviously, Marvel is not going to let us kill off all their characters in the first issue," chuckles Lee, "or make them into cross-dressing cyborgs or Bad Girls."

"And Captain America is not going to be blazing away with a machine gun and smoking a cigar," adds Rob Liefeld. "And I've already told Mark Waid that I was not going to be changing Captain America's costume. His response was, 'Whew!' " Liefeld did, however, make a slight alteration: he replaced the classic "A" on Cap's head with an eagle.

Okay, all you conspiracy nuts. Satisfied? Superstar Image Comics artists Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld hooking back up with Marvel Comics after a three-year break to breathe new life into *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man*, *Captain America* and *The Avengers* is not going to result in a major league facelift on these Marvel warhorses.

But amid the rumors of plummeting Marvel stock and the core books of the Marvel Universe being earmarked for cancellation, as well as the general malaise continuing to hang over the comic book industry, what can this first-of-its-kind all-star meeting of comic book minds hope to accomplish?

"What we're hoping to achieve is some sense of excitement," reflects Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras. "We're hoping this deal with Rob and Jim just gets people back to buying and enjoying comics, and that this will be the first step in making comics a fun business again."

"Jim and I have worked on Marvel characters in the past," says Liefeld, "and there was a certain chemistry about it. We're hoping our coming back to Marvel will produce that same chemistry once again."

By Marc Shapiro

Rob Liefeld (left) is set to draw Captain America, while the FF are in the hands of Jim Lee (right).

Lee, ever the realist, proclaims, "I think Marvel needs great talent for all these great characters that they have. Without great writing and great art, these great books are going to fall flat."

The Deal

The skinny on the deal that brings Marvel and Image to this mating dance, dubbed by all involved as "Unfinished Business," is relatively clear cut. Lee and Liefeld, who led the exodus out of Marvel and into Image in 1992, have signed what is being termed by Liefeld "a personal services contract" with Marvel to produce two books each for a 12-month period. Lee will handle *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* in whatever capacity he sees fit while Liefeld will do likewise with *Captain America* and *The Avengers*. The contract, which has an option clause for the creators to continue or bail after the first six issues of each book, gives Marvel final story approval but Lee and Liefeld literal *carte blanche* to recreate these four Marvel worlds.

The individual storylines on these books, which will begin at issue #1 sometime in late summer or early fall of '96 (and contain the Marvel logo), are strictly hush-hush at this point. As are, for the most part, the financial particulars of what is being perceived as a work-for-hire contract.

"It's a deal unlike any Marvel has ever cut," says Liefeld. "It's much more than simply work-for-hire. There's a generous profit participation on these characters in all their different forms. If we create new characters for any of these books we will also have profit participation, although Marvel will own any new characters we create."

Bygones Be Bygones

The Marvel/Image tango began in February of last year when new Marvel President Jerry Calabrese rang up Image and asked for a pow-wow with all its major players.

Liefeld recalls that although Calabrese indicated he wanted "the perceived hostilities of the past to be over," he remembers "that of course we were skeptical."

So skeptical, in fact, that none of the other Image folks present at the meeting expressed interest in doing anything with Marvel.

"A lot of people at Image were skeptical that anything would come out of this," Lee continues, "and I'm always leery of these things. I didn't know Jerry [Calabrese], and the whole middle and upper management had changed since I had been at Marvel."

Harras entered the negotiations in Summer '95; primarily to talk to Lee about returning in general to the Marvel fold but, in particular, to sound out Lee and Liefeld as to which books they would like to work on.

Lee, for his part, remembers that Marvel "indicated to me their interest in revitalizing their flagship line. That was fine with me because I always felt those books were the core of the Marvel Universe and, at least in recent history, had not had any real time in the sun. They wanted something exciting to happen to these properties and characters, and that's what I was interested in doing. I definitely wasn't interested in coming back just to do another Punisher project."

Liefeld is looking at this return to Marvel in more nostalgic terms. "The classic Marvel characters were what seemed to be important to them. When I worked for Marvel before, I never really had a chance to interface with the 'Legends.' So

NUCLEAR REACTION

Here's how the rest of the industry is reacting to the Lee/Liefeld/Marvel deal

❑ Todd McFarlane, Image co-founder and artist of *Spawn*: In the last few years, each of the Image co-founders have become businessmen. So in a downtime of business, Marvel and a couple of the co-founders decided there was a business deal that would help expand their business base. I'm sure it will be good business for both of them.

❑ Kurt Busiek, writer of *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*: At this point, I think it's hard to tell whether it's good or bad. But ultimately what it comes down to in my mind is, Are the books going to be good? The comics industry is in trouble. We need to find a way to fix it. So I guess my answer is a very ambiguous wait-and-see kind of answer.

❑ John Byrne, writer/artist of *Wonder Woman*: As a fan, I'm utterly appalled, but as a professional I really can't find anything wrong with it. It seems like a fairly canny thing for a business-oriented Marvel to be doing. But as a fan, I think it represents the death of the real Marvel, which has been bleeding for some years now.

❑ Erik Larsen, Image co-founder and writer/artist of *Savage Dragon*: My gut feeling is that I don't think this is going to help Rob or Jim. I think the older fans are not going to like what comes from Rob and Jim on these books and that all of the history of these characters is going to be completely wiped out. This is also going to bring more notice to Marvel Comics than I would like. I would rather see these guys doing their best work for Image.

❑ Hart Fisher, publisher of Boneyard Press: It's pretty pathetic. As soon as Image has a little trouble with sales they go running with their tails tucked between their legs back to Marvel for a little bit of coin to prop up their flagging interest. There'll be a big buzz, and there'll be good sales, and then six months later it's gonna tank hard.

❑ Ron Garney, artist on *Captain America*: It just seems like a real desperate move on [Marvel's] part. I think I would've had more respect for the decision had it been done with books that really needed the overhaul, not with books that were already on the upswing. I hope, in the end, it will benefit the industry as a whole, because it's been in such a state of flux for a couple of years now.

❑ Dan Jurgens, writer/artist of *Sensational Spider-Man*: It certainly is a show of no faith by Marvel in its editorial and creative people. At the same time, it's a big victory for Rob and Jim and creators in general. I hope they pull it off and have great success with it. The industry needs it.

❑ Tom Lyle, artist of *Punisher*: I don't think it's the death knell of Marvel, but as a person currently working for Marvel, I'm insulted that they had to go outside of the company to 'save' the company. I don't think it needed saving.

❑ Ron Marz, writer of *Green Lantern*: Before we see what Rob and Jim respectively are gonna do, I think it's very difficult for anyone to judge the wisdom or stupidity of this. Everybody needs to realize that a healthy Marvel means a more healthy industry as a whole.

❑ Frank Miller, writer/artist of *Sin City*: From the looks of things, at least for one or two of them, forming Image Comics and making such a dramatic break [from Marvel] was nothing but a negotiation ploy. I think it's a real sad turn of events.

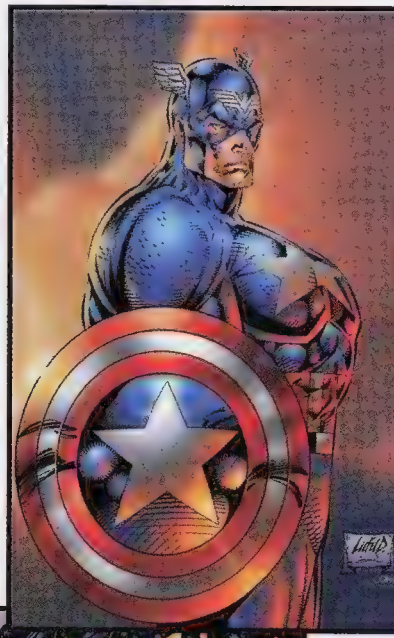
❑ *John B. Lacey (with additional reporting by Paul J. Grant and Marc Shapiro)*

to finally get a chance to play with them is great."

Who's Doing What & Other Mysteries

Liefeld and Lee's supporting casts on these books are currently in the works but no names have signed at press time. Liefeld indicates, however, that the scripting assignment for *Captain America* "is Mark Waid's to lose." Lee has indicated that Brandon Choi "will most likely co-write" *FF*, and his *WetWorks* pal Whilce Portacio will pencil the first six issues of *Iron Man*.

But Harras fuels the mystery by stating, "Jim has mentioned certain people he would want to do *Iron Man* and Rob has thrown some names at me but that's still up in the air. What I *can* tell you is that Marvel will have approval of every other person on the books."



Even more of a mystery surrounds what kind of stories and plot twists will evolve out of this mating dance.

Lee will only say that the Silver Surfer will "most definitely" appear in *Fantastic Four*, along with other FF mainstays like Galactus, Black Panther and the Inhumans.

Liefeld says he will co-plot and oversee his books, as well as admitting that his first priority is *The Avengers*. "As far as I'm concerned, *Avengers* is in need of a major rehaul," Liefeld says. "The title has been floundering for years, mostly

due to the lack of consistency on the book. The book has been missing a really winning combination, they can't seem to get the right artist together with the right writer. As a result, the book has fallen from grace in the hearts of fans and my first priority is to restore the book with the sense of grandeur it once had."

Harras drops the mini-bombshell that the Hulk "will make appearances in all four books and that he will be an ongoing theme in their titles."

"Marvel will ultimately have storyline approval," he continues, "but what Rob and Jim are planning is a new beginning for these characters. We all agree that we want to make these books an event. It will be the same story-driven Marvel Universe that started in the '60s with *Fantastic Four*. I've seen their preliminary story arc notes and it's looking good. Jim and Rob will essentially have *carte blanche* to create new characters if they want, but those characters would become the property of Marvel."

Lee doesn't see this as a stumbling block, though. "Marvel already has more characters than they know what to do with and, especially in the books I'll be doing, there's already a long history and continuity to contend with. Creating new characters doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense."

Dropping just the briefest of hints, Lee adds, "It's a fresh start beginning with issue #1. From what I've been told, the current storylines will end before I take over. So what I end up doing will be a cohesive, continuous story."

Liefeld, on the *Captain America* front, is optimistic. "I don't think you're going to see anything that's a real drastic departure in the beginning. Captain America's origin is still the same. But from that point on, there will be a drastic difference. I'm just kind of getting them in synch with the world we're now living in."

What Happens with Image?

Both Liefeld and Lee are quick to put down the notion that Image will somehow suffer by their work on Marvel books. Lee, who jokingly admits that he's been labeled a traitor by some postings on the Internet, says he will definitely be doing a lot of Image work in the coming year.

One of the more persistent speculations surrounding Marvel and Image tying the knot is that Liefeld and Lee have been hired to essentially modernize these icons' storylines and make them more attractive to Hollywood. Lee agrees "that may be part of it" although he reminds readers that the Fantastic Four and Iron Man have already been optioned for films. "Ultimately," Lee says, "I think the trick will be how to maintain these characters' icon status and make them thoroughly contemporary at the same time. And that goes for the comics as well as potential film properties."

Lee puts the personal bottom line to the history-making coupling between Marvel and Image. "I wouldn't have signed this deal if I wasn't going to enjoy it. At this point in my career I don't do anything I don't enjoy or can't get behind. I can't see wasting my time doing stuff that's going to make me miserable. This is going to be fun."

Marc Shapiro, who told you all about Mike Grell's new Maggie the Cat *series last issue, is holding his breath until Marvel asks him to come back.*

The Fans Speak Out

Fan response as a whole was mixed. While some thought the move would give the comics industry a shot in the arm, others thought Lee and Liefeld were "selling out" their respective corners of Image Comics.

Chris Wright of Moody, Maine, posted, "I am angered at what Marvel has done for the so-called 'fans.' I hope that this Image deal is only an 'Age of Apocalypse' deal and the current creative teams return."

An anonymous fan posted, "I think Rob and Jim are traitors. They leave Marvel in the name of 'Creator Rights' but now come back whimpering like dogs because their separate studios are not selling as well as they used to."

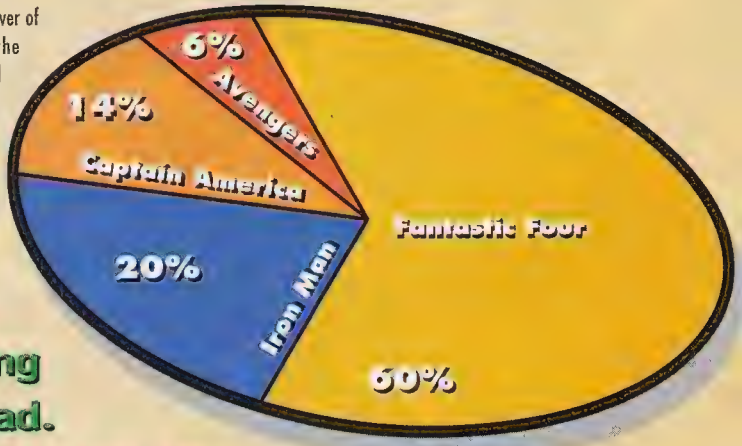
In the artists' defense, another fan said, "I don't consider Liefeld and Lee traitors; they weren't the ones doing the most spitting in Marvel's direction."

Most of the controversy reported came from Rob Liefeld's taking over of *Captain America*—many fans were very pleased with the current Cap team of writer Mark Waid and penciler Ron Garney, and would be disappointed with any change made on the title.

Good or bad, one fan wanted to keep things in perspective: "These guys should be given a chance."

■ *JBL*

The following pie chart is taken from a fan poll of which "revived" books they are most looking forward to reading.



Said one fan, "If he can get the writing on track, Jim Lee could bring the FF back from the dead. Actually, he can probably bring any book back from the dead."

THE MUST GO ON!

MINUS BRANDON LEE, 'CROW' SEQUEL TAKES FLIGHT WITH DARKER LOOK, DIFFERENT MISSION

CROW

By Jenny Peters

Swirling clouds of smoke part to reveal hundreds of death-masked revelers gyrating feverishly in silent ecstasy, all bathed in a surreal yellowish glow. Shoulders are shaking and hand-held skulls and streamers bob above the crowd, but not a sound escapes beyond the shuffling of feet. Suddenly, director Alex Proyas screams "Cut!" and the spell is broken. Masks are removed, conversations begin to swirl, and even the smoke clears, since the machine that makes it has been shut off. The festivities surrounding the Day of the Dead on the set of "The Crow: City of Angels" are over, for the moment.

Tonight, here on the back lot at Universal Studios, a new vision of a familiar story is being created. After already spending two weeks out on the dark, mean streets of the blighted downtown district of Los Angeles, "The Crow: City of Angels" production has retreated to the safety and relative comfort of a studio setting. Yes, that's right, a sequel to "The Crow" is being made, despite the fact that Brandon Lee, star of the original, perished in a fatal accident on that film's set.

"We certainly made a very determined attempt to not recreate the first one. Whereas many sequels and franchise series trade off on a very ingrained formula, which basically ends up being a variation on a theme, we decided that we did not want to step on the memory of the first film, nor cover ground that we already covered," explains producer Jeff Most, as he dodges the smoke machine being moved into a new position. Most is the man who originally saw the cinematic potential in "The Crow" comic series by James O'Barr, and, along with veteran movie producer Edward R. Pressman, turned those comics into a $20 million film that eventually grossed over $100 million worldwide.

That film's unexpectedly phenomenal success, along with its platinum-selling soundtrack, made a sequel practically a no-brainer, and a done deal, except for the glaring problem of a deceased star. How to solve it? Go back to the source. "We involved James O'Barr from the start of this new project. We did not want to move ahead with a series of films, with a second film, without his involvement," explains Most, stomping his feet to stay warm as the chill descends on this November night. "It was James's conception, in fact, to do a series of 'Crow' books, each time bringing back another character.

"Eric Draven completed his mission [in the first film]. He came back from the grave, he took care of those who committed an evil act against he and his loved one, and returned to the grave, having completed his mission. And so, in that sense, Eric Draven's story was a complete one. This is a new character altogether. So this character has his own set of circumstances to overcome, his own set of difficulties to overcome, and, quite frankly, the character is not in any way, shape or form indicative of the first one."

A production assistant interrupts, shouting "Quiet" through a bullhorn, then "Action!" The smoke swirls and the macabre silent dance unfolds yet again, this time with actors Vincent Perez and Richard Brooks staging a violent struggle in the midst of the celebrations. It is Perez, a French actor best known for his role as the queen's illicit lover in "Queen Margot," who has been tapped to figuratively step into Brandon Lee's shoes, while

Vincent Perez steps out of the first Crow's shadow in the new film

COUNTING CROWS

A comparison of "The Crow: City of Angels" to the original "Crow"

	CROW ONE	CROW TWO
MAIN CHARACTER	Eric Draven, musician, killed with his fiancée, returns from the dead for revenge against bad guys	Ashe Corbin, mechanic, killed with his son, returns from the dead for revenge against bad guys
LEAD ACTOR	Brandon Lee, darkly handsome half-Chinese, half-American actor, son of actor Bruce Lee, died of gunshot wound on the set	Vincent Perez, darkly handsome half-German, half-Spanish actor, virtually unknown in America
LEAD FEMALE ROLE	Sarah, a teenage girl befriended by Eric, both before and after his death	Sarah, the same girl, now an adult and tattoo artist obsessed with death, loved by Ashe only after his death
LEAD ACTRESS	Rochelle Davis, tough, unknown teen	Mia Kirshner ("Exotica"), fragile, unknown starlet
SETTING	Devil's Night, the day before Halloween, in a modern, yet mythical and gothic Detroit	Day of the Dead, the day after Halloween, in a modern, yet mythical and gothic Los Angeles
VILLAINS	Nasty drug dealers led by a menacing, stringy-haired Michael Wincott	Nasty criminals led by a menacing Richard Brooks and stringy-haired Iggy Pop
DIRECTOR	First-time feature film director Alex Proyas	First-time feature film director Tim Pope
SOUNDTRACK	Hit-packed platinum-seller featuring Stone Temple Pilots	Plans for hit-packed best-seller featuring The Cure, Iggy Pop
BUDGET	Around $20 million	Around $20 million

Brooks, of television's "Law and Order" fame, plays this new film's murderous villain.

"I definitely think Vincent Perez will be known [in America] after this film," predicts the movie's first-time director, Tim Pope, who's spending his "lunch" break (it's now almost midnight, but when the shoot goes on at night, lunch happens at strange times) perched on the cracked courthouse steps of the long-unused set from "Back to the Future." Pope first established himself, for more than 15 years, in music videos and commercials before taking this leap into feature films.

"In a way, we're both in a lucky position, because 'The Crow' is a known thing, so maybe people will go and see it because of that. But Vincent will be known after this movie—that's all I can say. I met about 200 people for the role, and they all looked like Brandon in some way, and I felt very strongly that this guy shouldn't be anything like Brandon. That was very important to me, and to everyone, I think."

Perez is clad in a full-length leather jacket and covered in bloody

Photos by Robert Zuckerman © 1996 Dimension Films

Director Tim Pope goes over footage for the Crow sequel

makeup to play the part of Ashe, a man who returns from the dead via the power of the Crow to avenge his murder, and, more importantly, the murder of his young son. He lights a cigarette and admits that he had some trepidation about following Brandon Lee into the world of "The Crow."

"I thought about whether it might be cursed, this production, and then I realized that the crow brings peace in many countries, in Asia and in India. The symbol of the crow is very positive. And I don't believe in those kinds of things," Perez insists, speaking with a lilting French accent, reflecting his upbringing in Switzerland and France. "Bad luck? I don't believe in that. We're just making a movie."

Confident in his ability to win over the often rabid fans of the original, Perez has embraced every aspect of the role, including the physically challenging elements. "Vincent brings a new edge to the character," says Pope. "He is not scared of being physical. I'm rarely using stuntmen, which is great. He's not a martial artist, but he is a fighter. I think we've got the essence of the fights and the drama."

The actor's stamina is evident tonight, as the fight scene among the revelers is repeated over and over again, each time with mind-numbing similarity. Perez is thrown onto the ground, kicked in the head and generally beat up more times than seems humanly possible. "I love doing my own stunts, all the physical work," Perez says with a smile. "We trained for two weeks—intense training regarding underwater breathing, fighting, and some work on my English. So all the little fears I had before shooting went away like that [*snaps his fingers*]. I feel very protected on this movie. If anything was too risky for me, I wouldn't do it. But I like physical things. I feel really proud of it after I've done them."

Perez has an intriguing perspective on "The Crow: City of Angels," as opposed to the first film, one that perhaps springs from his European sensibility. "For this movie I'm bringing my own world, just as Brandon Lee brought his to the first," ponders Perez, in

between drags of his smoke. "I think the first 'Crow' was more Edgar Allan Poe, while my 'Crow' is a mixture between Jim Morrison and Hamlet. When I said that, everyone seemed to be happy with this flavor I was trying to bring to this movie."

That outlook meshes with Pope's vision of the story, and of the differences between the first and second films. "Water is a very important metaphor in this movie. What's below the surface, what's above the surface, and what's reflected," Pope notes. "To me, the last movie smelt of earth, I guess you could say. This one smells of water. Ashe, when he dies, falls into water and wakes up underwater, tied to his son, and has to escape [from] him. To me, that's an idea of falling into yourself and then waking up and struggling out of the water to begin your journey."

Pope, screenwriter David Goyer ("Death Warrant") and producers Most and Pressman all envision this sequel as an entity completely separate from the first. "Everyone said it couldn't be done, so here I am," grins Pope. "I believed there was another story to be told, and we're telling that story. I think our movie's a lot more about the paradox of 'What if this thing actually happened to you? And you actually woke up and you were dead?'

"I feel our movie is quite pure. But it's going to be very different. We're going to have a vibrancy in this one. The last one was about death and this one, to me, is about—oh, this is going to sound completely pretentious on paper, but—life in death; what would it be like if you were dead? So I've tried to give the film a real vibrancy, to pull you inside the character's head."

Changes notwithstanding, "The Crow: City of Angels" will retain key elements from the first film. Plans are already in place to create a comparable soundtrack to the original for the sequel, with composer Graeme Revell on board once again to provide the ethereal instrumentals that were so evocative in "The Crow." And Pope, whose credits include music videos for The Cure, Paul McCartney, Neil Young and David Bowie, has big plans for the rest of the music.

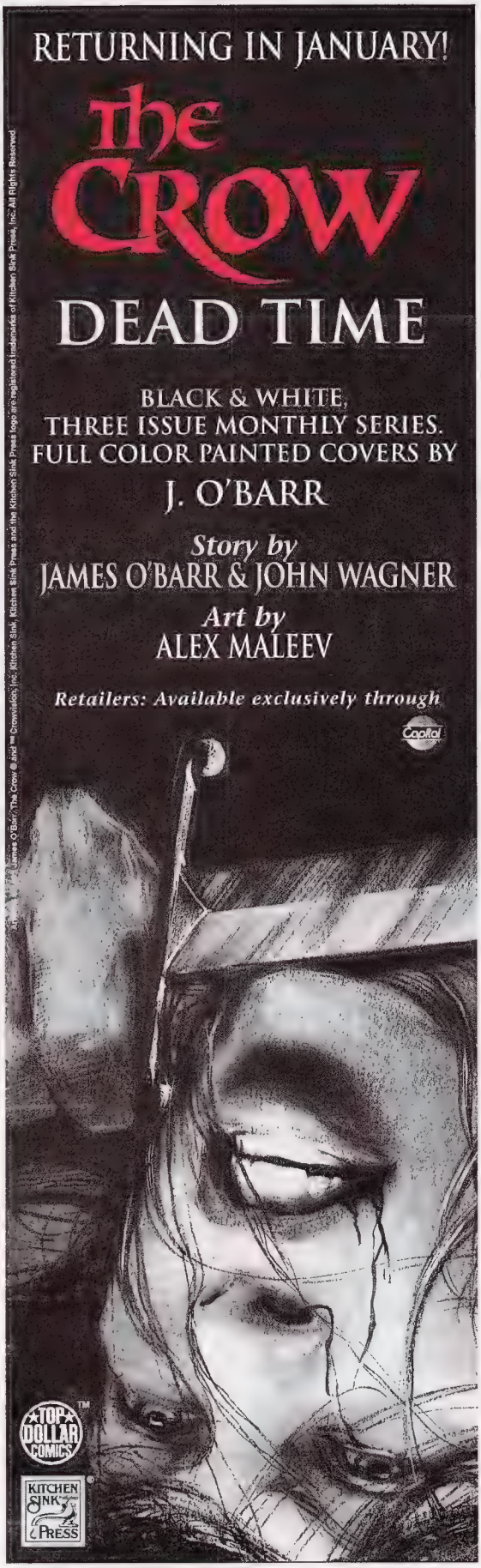
"The soundtrack isn't completely planned out yet," he says, "but Ed Pressman, the producer, realizes that we have to take as many chances as they took with the first one, so this time we're going to take bigger chances. I really would like Iggy Pop to do something—one of his old songs, I think, which would be really great. I've had a very strong association with The Cure for the past 15 years—I've done all their videos—so hopefully they're going to come in and do a song. I feel we're going to be as chancy with the soundtrack as we can. That's what this movie is all about."

Also returning from the first film is production designer Alex McDowell, the man responsible for the otherworldly look of that film. His designs, while creating a different look for Los Angeles than his vision of Detroit, still maintain a continuity of vision and promise to be as eye-popping as the original. "There's quite a bit of special effects work in this film," says Most. "It's integrated into this film, much the same way as it was in the first. Certainly the viewer won't be aware where there are special effects shots. It's integrated in a manner that is very seamless, so as to create a world, and not bring your attention to any one particular scene as standing out as an effects shot. Much the same way the effects were used in the first film, with model shots, plate shots, seamlessly handled so as to never take the viewer out of that universe."

Taking the time to devise a whole new Los Angeles means that "The Crow: City of Angels" won't grace your local movie theater until the summer of 1996, but if Pope has his way, it will arrive "on time and on budget." And it will certainly be something new and different.

"We're going to create a vision of Los Angeles that no one has ever seen before. Not 'Blade Runner,' not 'Beverly Hills Cop,' not any of that other [garbage], none of that stuff again," Pope grins confidently. "I mean, it's not 'Batman,' and that's what great about it."

Jenny Peters herself is a special effect, thanks to today's amazing technology.



SPIN DOCTOR

Al Ortego

Kurt Busiek finds new twists to old concepts in Untold Tales of Spider-Man and Astro City

Kurt Busiek, feeling a bit under the weather, is headed for better climates. He and his wife are about to take a plane from their home in Washington State for a few warm days in Arizona—but first he must shower and then drop off his dog at pal, and fellow comic book pro, Karl Kesel's place.

"We're getting away from it all, but we're taking it all with us," says Busiek, looking forward to time away from the phones to concentrate on work—and having some fun too.

On a roll since writing 1993's award-winning *Marvels*, Busiek, 35, continues to be one of comics' busiest and best writers. His regular workload currently includes *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* and *The New ShadowHawk*. Quantity—more than 30 regular issues and other

***Astro City*'s Silver Agent lands a blow against a fishy fiend.**

Far left: Busiek

scattered assignments per year—and quality can be a draining combination, and he's hopeful that the trip will recharge his batteries.

But before the shower, before the dog and before the airport, Busiek manages to fit in an interview with *Wizard*. At first, sounding tired and a bit sluggish—although never stand-offish—Busiek turns up the energy when he talks about his current works. He'd make a great professor for Superheroes 101, relaying an incisive understanding of the genre.

And it's that kind of understanding that helps him simultaneously write the earliest adventures of Spider-Man, create his own universe—past and present—in Astro City and help shape the new identity of Image Comics creator Jim Valentino's vigilante ShadowHawk.

"Kurt makes you care about the characters in his stories as people, whether they be the heroes, the villains or the men on the street," says Tom Brevoort, Busiek's editor on *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*. "Kurt's also got a real knack for finding spins on old clichés that nobody's ever seen before, and a talent for using past continuity as a springboard for new adventures without it becoming a crutch.

"Above all, Kurt's work is accessible. You needn't have to read 30 years worth of comics to understand what's going on, although, if you have, you may well see additional shadings on the subject matter in question."

Brevoort says *Untold Tales* has struck a critical chord, especially with older readers, and that's in part due to Busiek's idea to set the book during the earliest issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, something which wasn't part of the original plan.

As part of its "continuity friendly" line of 99-cent books, Marvel's editorial staff decided that, with all the Spidey titles already absorbed in the clone storyline, it would set the new book in the past, specifically during Peter Parker's college years. Busiek first heard about the project from another writer who was approached to write the book.

"He ultimately turned it down and, as soon as he did, I called Tom Brevoort and said, 'How dare you start a book like this without me?' " Busiek laughs. "Tom and I were going to talk further about it after Tom's Christmas break. By the time he'd come back, I'd already written an outline for the first six issues because I had too many ideas in my head and needed to get them on paper. I hadn't been told about the college years thing, so I started at the point I would have wanted to start at: the soonest point where we had enough classic villains introduced so there would be people to deal with, but not so late that I couldn't do the subplots I'm doing."

BY ROB ALLSTETTER

Subplots like: How did Flash, Liz and the gang react when Peter's photographs of Spider-Man appeared in *The Daily Bugle*? Or, when Peter stopped wearing glasses, how did Aunt May react? And did Peter go to the eye doctor?

"I can just see him thinking, 'Can't go to eye doctor. If he sees there's little spiders in the back of my eyes, he'll know I'm Spider-Man. Must find other solution,' " Busiek says in a timid Peter's voice. "And, of course, the other solution involves a supervillain. As it turns out, that's issue #7."

Those types of ideas made up his outline, which sold Brevoort on the era—and on having Busiek write the series.

Peter Parker and Batwing, a character introduced in *Untold Tales* #2, seek the help of the Lizard's altruistic alter-ego Dr. Curt Connors, who knows a thing or two about half-man, half-animals. Ron Frenz, who drew *Amazing Spider-Man* in the 1980s, fills in for regular artist Pat Olliffe on that issue.

Following that, a new villain will be brought into play, and Busiek explores the background of Betty Brant—her family and how she got such a great job as J. Jonah Jameson's secretary at *The Daily Bugle*.

Also in the works is an unscheduled crossover with *Sensational Spider-Man*, writer/penciler Dan Jurgens' new book. The stories are planned to be self-contained and center around a new villain that Spidey meets and beats in *Untold Tales* and returns for the first time in *Sensational*.

"I'M COLLABORATING WITH STAN LEE OF 30 YEARS AGO." —BUSIEK ON *UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN*

Busiek says he hasn't consulted original Spidey writer Stan Lee in doing *Untold Tales*—"I'm collaborating with Stan Lee of 30 years ago"—and uses the *Marvel Masterworks* hardcover reprints of early *Amazing Spider-Man* issues and his own back issues for reference. He meticulously weaves stories around past continuity, yet they still manage to stand on their own.

"The first and foremost aim is to tell a good, enjoyable Spider-Man story that doesn't require the reader to know a thing about the character or his history," he says. "Anything the reader needs to know will be explained in that issue. So while we're having a good time exploring stuff that connects to various points in Spidey's early history, we're making sure the book'll be a good read for both newcomers to the character and longtime readers."

Untold Tales #9 is a Lizard story in which

And what does Busiek think of the handling of today's Spider-Man, now under the guise of Ben Reilly after the long clone story arc?

"It's not what I would have chosen to do," he says quite carefully. "It's really shaken up the book, and I think that there may be lasting repercussions for a long time to come. I know that a lot of the fans are upset about these developments, but let's see where all this goes."

One of the juggling acts in doing *Untold Tales* is that Busiek has to fit his stories into those that were written more than 30 years ago in real time, while trying to retain the spirit of them in an era that is now much closer in "Marvel time."

That isn't a problem in *Astro City*, because it's a universe and timeline belonging solely to Busiek. He tells stories in the past and present and, like in *Marvels*, uses the real world as his inspiration, frequently with the perspectives of the man or woman on the street.

"I think the superhero genre is a genre of metaphor and it works best when it has some resonance in real life," he says. "I look for the connection of what a superhero might do or what somebody in a superhero universe might be doing and in what way that resonates in a real-honest, real-world emotion or predicament. And have the story based on that, not just this fantasy 'What if?' alternate reality."

With *Astro City*, Busiek is looking for archetypes, the building blocks for a character's structure, and exploring them as well as putting new spins on them. Some of these archetypes have been used repeatedly, and that's why a character like Samaritan, who appeared in the first issue of *Astro City*, seems so much like Superman.

"I made a rule for myself that I am not going to put anybody in the book that's simply, 'I like this character. I'll change his name, I'll change his costume and I'll stick him in my book,' " Busiek says. "If there's a strong archetype that I want to deal with, I'll go to the base of the archetype and build a new character on that archetype without regard for the other use of that archetype in comics.

"So, Samaritan is Superman-like, yes. But with Samaritan I'm going back to that archetype of the noble, self-sacrificing hero who is practically all-powerful, but he's a servant. He helps us. He's not out for himself. He's purely out to help others, and I'll explore that in a different way.

"What I did with Samaritan, you could not do with Superman. Superman has a life. Samaritan's colors come from Renaissance Bible days; the white dove on his chest is a biblical symbol. Samaritan is going back to the idea that underneath Superman is a powerful Christ figure as a superhero. That's an archetype that existed before Superman and an archetype that's been used by others since Superman. It's not a copy of Superman; it's a connection to one of the elements that fuels Superman.

"One of the other elements that fuels Superman is that of the alien visitor. But that's not Samaritan. Samaritan's human."

Similarly, the First Family instantly rings of Fantastic Four. But, as Busiek points out, they are quite different.

"The First Family have different costumes, have different powers, have different names, have different origins, have different personalities. And there are six of them, so they're not the Fantastic Four," Busiek says.

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AND
THE POWERS
OF THE DARK
FOR ALL THE
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written by
Garth Ennis
PREACHER HELLBLAZER

drawn by
Brandon Peterson
MISERY RIPCLAW MINISERIES

inks by
Batt
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"What they are is another exploration of that question, 'What about a family of superheroes?' I'll tell you, I would have named them something else, something that didn't have the initials FF, if I could have found a better name."

It's hard to find better names than the ones Busiek has used in *Astro City*, which continues his collaboration from *Marvels* with Alex Ross, who paints covers and designs the characters. (Brent Anderson draws the interiors.) Especially the kooky names from the past. Members of the old Honor Guard include Bouncing Beatnik and The Old Soldier, characters whom Busiek says got the most fan reaction, until Jack-in-the-Box showed up in *Astro City* #3.

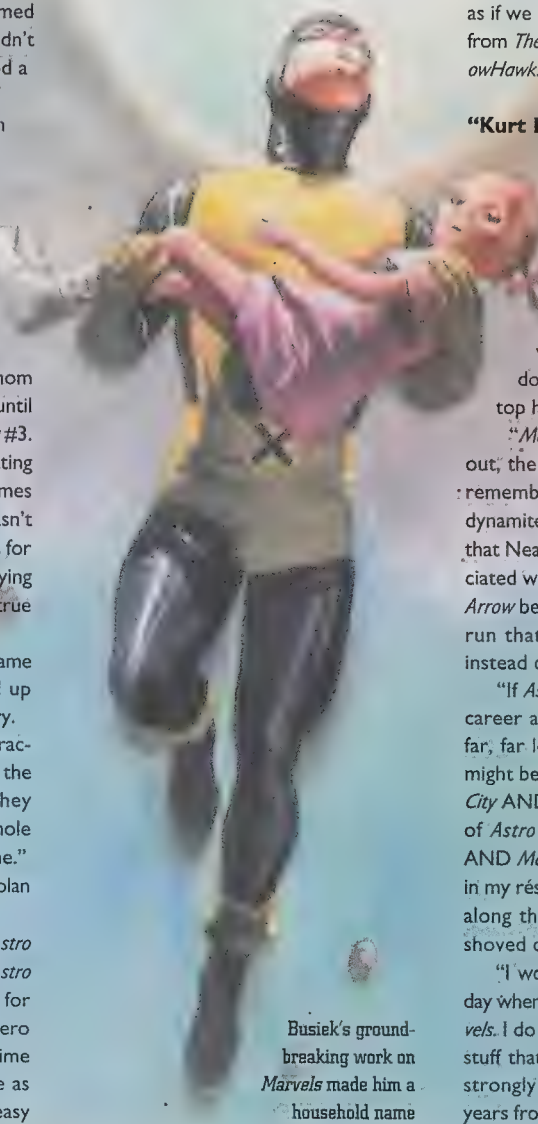
"One of the things I've found liberating is that I don't have to come up with names that sound modern," Busiek says. "I wasn't in competition with all the other writers for cool-sounding names, because I was trying to come up with names that would ring true for characters in 1959."

Busiek points out that Demolitia, a name for a modern villain he used, popped up soon afterward in an *Action Comics* story.

"I don't have to worry about a character like Jack-in-the-Box showing up in the *Avengers* or *WildC.A.T.s*. Noooooo, they won't," laughs Busiek. "I've got the whole scale of comics history wide open to me."

Does Busiek have some grand story plan he can reveal for *Astro City*?

"No. I know what I want to do in *Astro City* #50. I know what I want to do in *Astro City* #100," he says. "But the grand plan for *Astro City* is to let me explore the superhero genre and find out where it goes. Anytime I come up with a story that strikes me as easy to write, I'll throw it away. If it's easy to write, I'm not interested in putting it in *Astro City*. I'm interested in finding out what else we can do with superheroes than in doing anything we've already done."



Busiek's groundbreaking work on *Marvels* made him a household name among Marvel fans

You are now leaving Astro City. That's how the road sign at the end of every issue of the book reads, and it's a perfect segue into talking about Busiek's other ongoing series for Image—*The New ShadowHawk*. ShadowHawk creator Jim Valentino credits Busiek with developing the concept of ShadowHawk being the spirit of justice denied, and Busiek is putting his spin on Valentino's mystery man concept from the early issues of the first *ShadowHawk* series from over two years ago.

"We're building up to the biggest revelation about ShadowHawk ever!" Busiek pitches. "As of issue #9, the series is going to be something completely different from what Jim did, than anything I did. It's almost as if we had to change the title of the book from *The New ShadowHawk* to *The True ShadowHawk*. That's probably about all I can say."

"Kurt Busiek, writer of *Marvels*." It's hard to mention the first part without the second. More than two years after his collaboration with Ross, Busiek's name is linked to the series that is still available in a collected format every month from Marvel. He's comfortable with that identity and focuses on doing good work instead of trying to top himself.

"*Marvels* is, for good or ill, my breakout, the book that made my name worth remembering. *Marvels* was like a stick of dynamite going off," he says. "I don't know that Neal Adams will ever stop being associated with Batman or *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* because that's sort of like the home run that made him into NEAL ADAMS instead of Neal Adams.

"If *Astro City* becomes the focus of my career and it's something that I work on far, far longer than *Marvels*, I think that I might become Kurt Busiek, writer of *Astro City* AND *Marvels*, or Kurt Busiek, writer of *Astro City*, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* AND *Marvels*. *Marvels* will always be there in my résumé and, until enough stuff comes along that hits as hard, it just won't get shoved out.

"I wouldn't really look forward to the day when nobody remembers that I did *Marvels*. I do hope to continue to be able to do stuff that has a chance of connecting that strongly with the readers. Hopefully, 20 years from now, *Marvels* will be considered my big break rather than the sum total of everything you need to know about Kurt Busiek. *Marvels* will still be there, though, and I'm proud of that."

Clearly, Busiek is having a blast with his current projects and probably won't leave them anytime soon. Don't interpret that as stagnancy, though. He's also looking into novels, screenplays and writing for animation.

"Most importantly, I'm a storyteller," he says. "I like telling the stories in the comics media, but I also like telling stories in other media. I don't look at novels as the next highest rung on the ladder. It's just another way to tell a story. And it's one I'd like to explore. But I like writing comics; I don't look at comics as an inferior medium."

Rob Allstetter, who was on the set of the "Generation X" movie last issue, will probably never write Untold Tales of NFL SuperPro.

FITTING IN

Kurt Busiek weaves his *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* stories in and out of early continuity of *Amazing Spider-Man*. For you continuity buffs, he tells *Wizard* how *Untold* fits into *Amazing*:

Untold #1 takes place between *ASM* #6 and *ASM* #7.

Untold #2 takes place between *Untold* #1 and *ASM* #7.

Untold #3 takes place right after *ASM* #7.

Untold #4 takes place shortly after the lead story in *ASM* #8. (The backup story in #8 takes place quite a bit later, after Spidey has met Dorrie Evans for the first time.)

Untold #5 takes place during the opening of *ASM* #10, after Aunt May is home from the hospital but before she goes to Florida with the Abbots.

Untold #6 and #7 take place during the Big Man's crime spree in *ASM* #10, and *Untold* #8 and #9 take place between *ASM* #10 and #11. ■ *RA*

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THE WIZARD Q&A: MARK WAID

FROM *FLASH* TO *X-MEN*, MARK WAID MAY BE COMICS' HOTTEST WRITER

BY TOM RUSSO

His name is Mark Waid. And it very well may be...he's the fastest fan alive. We're not talking "fast" as in fleet of foot—the guy only writes *The Flash* and *Impulse*. We're talking mentally fast, "Jeopardy!" fast even.

Though recognized as one of the industry's premier writers, Waid has a reputation throughout the industry for his unsurpassed command of DC Comics history. It's a knack that has enabled him to put together arguably the most acclaimed run ever on *Flash* (50 issues and counting), and won him such expansive assignments as DC's recent *Underworld Unleashed* crossover mini-series and the upcoming twilight-of-the-DC-Universe epic *Kingdom Come* with artist Alex Ross.

He's recently demonstrated that he knows his way around Marvel's annals as well, moving in as the new writer on *X-Men* and *Captain America*. *Wizard* wrestled Waid's keyboard away from him one brisk morning in November to pick his overflowing brain.

WIZARD: It's no secret by now that you know your stuff. Where does your faculty for remembering all those comics come from?

MARK WAID: I have no idea. All I know is I can't name any presidents between Lincoln and Kennedy, and I can only name 38 states, but I can tell you Clark Kent's social security number because I saw it once in a comic book. I just have a photographic memory for visuals. Not so much for the printed word, but certainly for visuals. I'm good with that stuff. It's really sad.

What's the most obscure bit of trivia you know?

Clark Kent's social security number.

Oh, so you meant that literally. A sure-fire dazzler at parties, eh?

That's exactly it. [*Laughs*]

So, how did you get your start in comics?

In the early '80s, I started working for the fanzines of the time—*Amazing Heroes*, *Comics Buyer's Guide*, that sort of thing. I just sent in articles on spec, and that allowed me to make some connections with the editorial folks at DC. I sold my first story, a Superman story, to Julie Schwartz...wow, 11 years ago.

What was the story?

Action Comics #572—it was called "Puzzle of the Purloined Fortress." Someone had burgled the entire Fortress of Solitude and Superman had to figure out who, how they had gotten into this big, locked fortress, and what they had done with all his stuff. You know, it actually holds up. It doesn't suck.

It was around this time that you worked on staff for Fantagraphics, right?

Yeah, they moved me out to California. I was working for somewhere along the lines of minimum wage. Then I was offered a job at DC in 1987, so I went to work there for a couple of years as an editor on *Legion of Super-Heroes*, *Doom Patrol* and some other assorted odd projects. And even though I decided to go freelance, I miss being an editor, to tell you the truth. If I had my druthers, I'd just as soon be an editor as a writer. You just get a chance to put your finger in more pies that way.

You seem to have your finger in quite a few pies as it is, writing four monthly titles. How do you handle writing all those books?

[*Laughs*] I just live, eat and breathe this stuff. I try not to think about how I do it, because I'm afraid that the moment I think about it, it'll be like a soap bubble—it'll just burst. Kind of like Wile E. Coyote walking off the cliff.

VITAL STATS

Name:
Mark Waid
Occupation:
Writer on *The Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Flash*, *Impulse* and *X-Men*
Date and Place of Birth:
March 21, 1962, in Hueytown, Ala.
Base of Operations:
Pennsylvania, but moves frequently, impeded only by his collection of 20,000 comics.
Influences:
Elliot S! Maggin, Robert Loren Fleming, Harlan Ellison, William Goldman, Ellery Queen.
Favorite Breakfast Cereal:
Cocoa Pebbles

"WALLY WEST IS ME 50 POUNDS AND A FULL HEAD OF HAIR AGO. WALLY IS CLEARLY MY ALTER-EGO. AND HE'S THE EASIEST CHARACTER TO WRITE BECAUSE HE HAS MY VOICE."

Waid has big changes in store for The Flash

Is burnout a problem?

There are times I can feel the hairs on the back of my hand begin to singe. And the only thing I can do in a case like that is somehow find a couple of days just to shut down and not do anything, which is very difficult when the workload is as big as it is.

There have been rumors that you might be leaving *The Flash* sometime soon.

No. Not a chance. I've got *Flash* mapped out in my head through about issue #150, and we'll see from there.

Brian Augustyn, your editor on *Flash* and *Impulse*, has made the point that your writing goes beyond good characterization—that you genuinely identify with your characters, Wally West [a.k.a. The Flash] in particular.

Absolutely. Wally is me 50 pounds and a full head of hair ago. I have to find something to identify with in every character or else I'm lost; Wally is clearly my alter-ego. And he's the easiest character to write because he has my voice.

Speaking of which, *Impulse* seems to have a very authentic tone. Have you got a kid or a nephew or some-

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"I think WARCHILD is the best stuff I've written for Image yet"
Alan Moore
Wizard Magzine #52

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one that you're drawing from to project what it's like in the junior high halls these days?

I just keep my ears open. I hang out at the—well, I don't hang, but I go to the malls, and when you go to malls or the movies or anyplace that teenagers are hanging around, you hear new words and new phrases. And then, frankly, you make up a lot of it yourself. If you've seen the movie *Heathers*, the writer, Daniel Waters, said the only way he could keep the slang hip at all was to make it up completely from scratch. That way it stays timeless. I think that was a good rule of thumb, so I try to do the same thing. As far as kids' attitudes, I'm just drawing from what I remember from the happiest times of my life.

"WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA, WE'VE FOUND THE ONE THING TO DO TO HIM THAT NOBODY'S DONE YET AND, TO MY MIND, IT'S ALSO THE MOST HORRIBLE THING YOU CAN DO TO STEVE ROGERS."

What have you got in the works for *Flash* and *Impulse*?

We're bringing in a new Flash fairly soon. It's somebody we've seen before, but not quite this way, and it's a character that will replace Wally in the book. [See sidebar.] With *Impulse*, I'm just making it up month to month. I have no grand plan.

How about your Marvel books?

With *Captain America*, we've found the one thing to do to him that nobody's done yet and, to my mind, it's also the most horrible thing you can do to Steve Rogers. That happens in issue #450, and it kicks off a whole new story arc. Then in *X-Men*, the promise we made was to resolve a lot of the long-term dangling plotlines. If plans hold, this is the year we learn the identity of the traitor in the group and tie off the Legacy Virus. [See sidebar.]

How much pressure do you feel coming onto *X-Men*?

A tremendous amount because there's 20 years of stories, at least five of which I never read and have to get back into. And I think that when the diehards look at the book, they don't care who's writing it—if it's not Chris Claremont, it's prejudged as "not as good as Chris." So in that sense, it's a no-win situation.

And this is really the first time you're coming onto a title that's already in its stride.

Oh yeah. Everything else has been a fixer-upper—which I kind of like—because those are no-lose situations. But yeah, that's exactly it.

So what have your favorite X-Men storylines been?

Same as everybody else—a lot of the Chris Claremont/John Byrne stuff. I think that those guys really kicked butt just before and during the "Dark Phoenix Saga" stuff. It was this gigantic ride—a lot of action and character, not 22 pages of people sitting around the mansion having coffee and talking about their problems. I don't care about that! I want to see them get the hell out of the mansion and go globetrotting. I want high adventure.

Mark Gruenwald's 10-year run on *Captain America* must be a tough act to follow too.

It's intimidating, because there is so much history there. But when Ralph Macchio called up and said, "We want you to take it over," I just absolutely couldn't wait. Cap is my all-time favorite Marvel character. And Mark was very helpful in making the changeover go smoothly—he gave me a bunch of notes and reference materials. He was much more helpful to me than I'm ever going to be to the schmuck who takes *Flash* away from me. [*Laughs*]

END OF A LEGACY

1996 looks to be a good year for the X-Men. Or more specifically, for X-Men fans. With *X-Men* #51, Mark Waid not only takes over as the regular monthly scribe but as mutant house cleaner as well.

"It's the year of ending the dangling subplots," he says. "We're trying to get the traitor stuff straightened out and the Legacy virus closed off with a bang."

Besides wrapping up loose ends, Waid hopes to have a different take on a familiar character, one that's sure to stir some controversy.

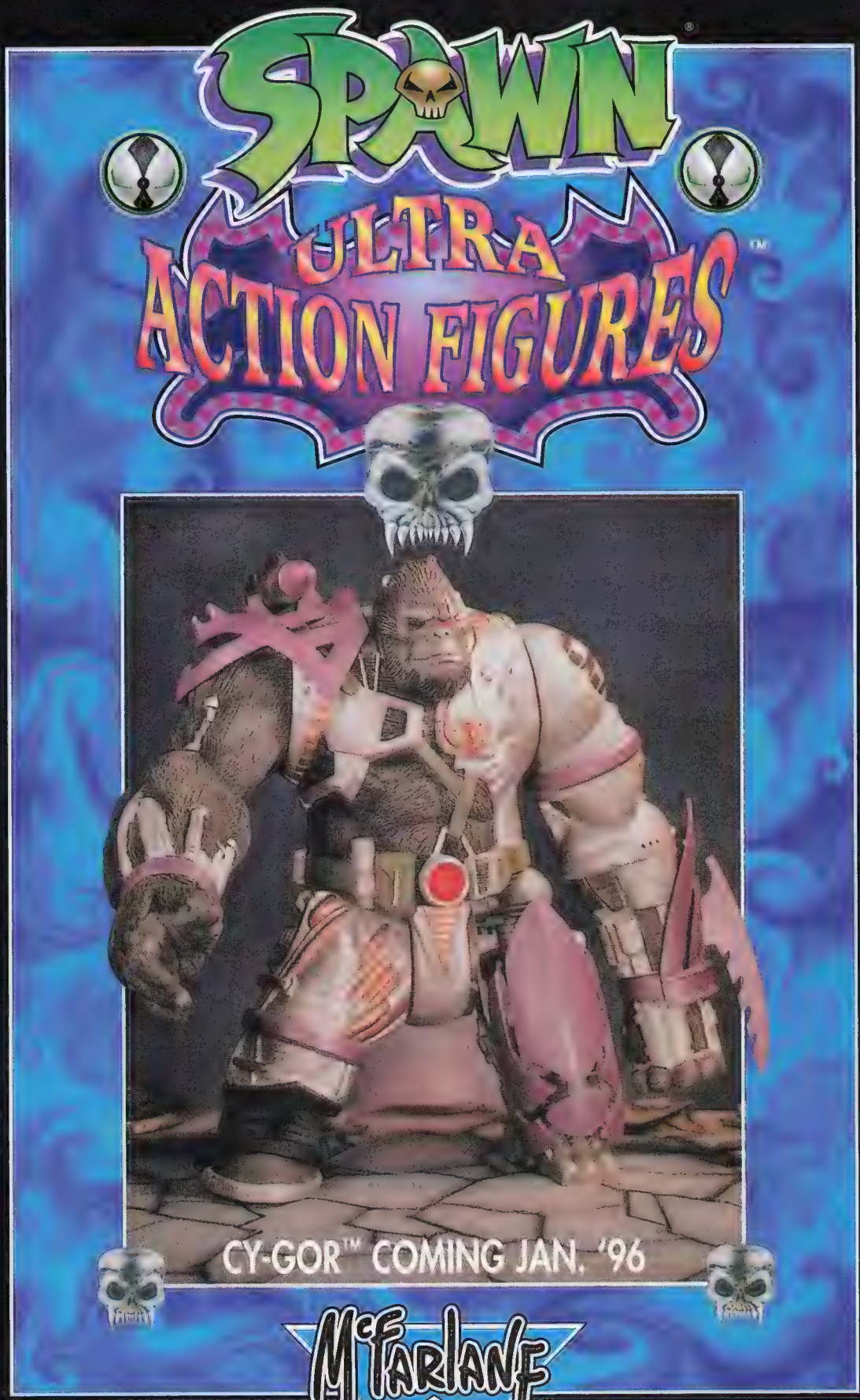
"For the time being, I'm really interested in setting up Professor X and making it clear that he's not the warm, fuzzy cuddly man that he has been under previous administrations. That is a valid interpretation of the character. But to me, what's more manipulative than a guy who sets up a shapechanger to take his place in the X-Men to die [*X-Men* (vol. 1) #42], and then lies to his students about being dead? He's more of a hardass. In deference to anybody who's come on the book before me—and all interpretations are valid—my take on Charles Xavier is that Scott and Jean wouldn't call him Charles. They just wouldn't."

Waid's full-time X-Men debut (Waid has previously scripted a handful of X-tales) is in January's *X-Men Unlimited* #10 where he makes an unprecedented change in the team's membership. "We will have replaced the Beast with the evil Alter-X Beast [from last year's 'Age of Apocalypse' storyline] and nobody knows it, because he's made some genetic changes to himself. *Unlimited* #10 is the story of the Alter-X Beast learning everything he needs to know about Hank's past life in order to take Hank out of the picture and then infiltrate the team. For the foreseeable future, the Alter-X Beast is the Beast."

This certainly brings up an interesting revelation that's sure to whet readers' appetites.

"Is he the traitor in the X-Men?" teases Waid. "Who knows? He certainly would fit the bill. Seems awful easy though."

Hey, as far as the X-Men are concerned, nothing's ever easy. ■ *Andrew Kardon*



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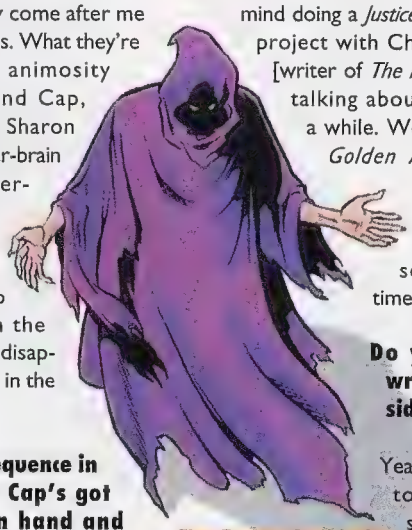
What makes Cap such a favorite of yours?

There's no kind of story you can't do with him. He's an icon. And I like the fact that he is mythic and larger than life. A lot of the '60s Marvel heroes were larger-than-life characters who were given tiny problems that made them more human, but in doing so it also made them a lot more life-size. Cap ranks with Superman and Tarzan and The Shadow in terms of characters that are much more mythic in proportion. I also just like his can-do attitude, the fact that he always believes that there's a way to solve every problem and never gives up. He's not caught up in angst. I loathe comic book characters that are steeped in angst, because if I could run at the speed of sound or fly through the air, I would not have any problems. I would not be feeling sorry for myself.

"THERE'S SOME COMFORT IN THAT I THINK I CAN AT LEAST GET LISTENED TO IF I WANT TO PITCH SOMETHING AT MARVEL OR DC."

Bringing back Sharon Carter is something that seems to have stirred up the *Captain America* faithfuls a bit.

Yeah, they've actually come after me with torches and rakes. What they're upset about is the animosity between Sharon and Cap, because in the past Sharon was such a fluffernutter-brain and didn't have a personality at all. But I've done my research, and what they forget is that she and Cap were very much on the outs by the time she disappeared from the book in the late 1970s.



Time Trapper from Legion

That was a great sequence in issue #447 where Cap's got the cosmic cube in hand and realizes he can reshape the world any way he chooses—and the next panel is a picture of Sharon Carter drawn '70s-style.

John Romita Sr.-style. And it was John. We actually got him to step in and draw the panel.

Was that something you had requested?

Yes, I begged for it.

I'm guessing you don't have to do a whole lot of begging these days, though. Are you at the point now where you can pick and choose projects?

Yes and no. There's some comfort in that I think I can at least get listened to if I want to pitch something at Marvel or DC. It doesn't mean that it'll go, but I can at least get listened to. And then they can all go out to lunch and snicker. [*Laughs*]

Are there any other books that you'd like a shot at?

Well, [writer] Fabian Nicieza and I are working together on four issues of an ongoing DC book. We can't announce which one yet, but that will be Fabian's first work for DC. And someday I would like to get back to *Legion of Super-Heroes*. Beyond that, I don't quite know what else to do. There's a part of me that wants to do *Justice League of America*. I wouldn't mind doing a *Justice League: Year One* project with Christopher Priest [writer of *The Ray*]—we've been talking about doing one for a while. We'd do it like *The Golden Age*, where it's a stand-alone book that we can do over some period of time.

Do you have any writing goals outside of comics?

Yeah, I wanted to try to break into the short story market, but I'm just not very comfortable with prose. I write dialogue reasonably well, but prose is not my forte. But I'm in my early 30s—I would not like to get to 40 without ever having tried television and screenplays. I don't think I want to be a movie or television writer *per se*, but I would like to dabble. I would like to see if I could. And that's as far as my ambition reaches.

BACK IN A FLASH

There's a new Flash in town and it ain't a souped-up Wally West this time. Following the tragic events of "Dead Heat"—the story arc that raced through *The Flash* and *Impulse* in recent months—Wally West is no more.

"'Dead Heat' ends with Wally skirting the time stream again," says writer Mark Waid, "and allegedly, on his way back home, there's this big flash of light and everyone's glad to see Wally, except when the dust clears it's not Wally, it's John Fox, the 27th century Flash."

Fresh from his first appearance in the *Flash 50th Anniversary Special*, John Fox must get used to the idea of hanging out in the mere 20th century. *Flash* #112 deals with Fox adapting to our time, and Flash's supporting cast adapting to him since it seems Wally is gone forever. Though Waid hints that Wally's future is "up in the air."

"The entire supporting cast has to get used to a completely different man in the suit. Central City has to get used to it and the villains have to get used to it as well. [Impulse] will brush up against this character from time to time, but after "Dead Heat" and the intertwining of those two books, we're gonna keep them separated for a while."

Fans might be wondering just why Waid decided to get rid of Wally now, and not at the end of "Terminal Velocity" in *Flash* #100. As expected, Waid has his reasons.

"Fans thought we were changing Flash out in issue #100 and they were right, they were just ahead of us. It worked out better here. I knew that *Flash* #100 had to end with Wally. It just had to. It was Wally's story."

Waid is quick, however, to dismiss this new Flash as part of the current trend of replacing consistent characters with brand new versions.

"It's not a cynical replacement stunt. We're not trying to come right out and tell you that Wally West is gone forever. This guy's actually a reasonably likable human being with some claim to the name." ■ *Andrew Kardon*

You know, I assumed you had to be maybe in your 40s with some of the comics history you know.

Nah, I just started reading at an early age. I can't imagine being in my 40s and still writing about teenagers almost exclusively. That seems to be on the edge of creepy.

So what is Clark Kent's social security number anyway?

Oh, I'm not telling you. [*Laughs*] If I told you, the whole world would know. And then I've got no more advantage, do I? W

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Magic: The Gathering is the explosive phenomenon that's blowing away the competition in comic book stores

Tapping. Mana burn. Shivan Dragons.

Perhaps you've heard the strange jargon being whispered in comic book stores. Maybe you've seen its source. You've probably seen them in the comic store, often right next to the cash register: those packs of funny looking cards other people are always playing with. They sure don't look like the pinochle cards your grandparents use, and everybody seems to be trading them like sports cards, sometimes paying more for them than a Joe Montana rookie card in mint condition. What are they?

People play with these cards like crazy. They carry them in binders. They play with them in these funny little plastic sleeves that remind you of the sneeze guard at the salad bar. They play with them on table tops, on the floor, on the sidewalks. Just what are they doing?

Why, they're playing a game called *Magic: The Gathering*.

Magic is the hottest thing to hit fantasy gaming since roleplaying (ever heard of *Dungeons & Dragons*?). It catapulted Wizards of the Coast, the game's manufacturer, from a small-time company into a megalithic corporation with worldwide offices in Seattle, Antwerp, Glasgow and soon Paris. Employees are tight-lipped about the company's sales, but they're estimated at over $100 million. Not bad for a company that started out as just five people.

In turn, *Magic* spawned a host of imitations conceived by people anxious to capitalize on the success of this explosive new kind of game. Still, WotC got a big head start, and they remain firmly in the lead, the uncontested leader of this amazing new industry that has swept the world.

What is Magic?

By Matt Forbeck

RDP D 16

Magic is a collectible card game in which each player assumes the part of a powerful wizard. You and your foe each use your own personal deck made up from your choice of over a thousand different cards. Through card play, you try to inflict damage on each other by casting spells and dispatching heroic gladiators and grotesque monsters.

Another part of *Magic*'s appeal is that it is a "collectible card game" (or CCG for short). CCGs are strategy card games that are collectible for many different reasons. For some, the sharp artwork on the cards plays into desirability. For others, the rarity of cards adds value, and some cards are more advantageous to own because they are powerful during game play.

The game is currently in its fourth edition. It has added eight expansion sets, with more coming all the time. It has been published in six languages. It has spawned a comic book line (see sidebar), a series of novels published by HarperPrism, a promised CD-ROM and network-play game from MicroProse, over a dozen fanzines and magazines (including *Wizard*'s sister publication *InQuest*), and other accessories too numerous to list here. Over a billion *Magic* cards have been sold.

In short, it's a phenomenon. And it didn't take long to catch on.

The History

In 1991, Richard Garfield was a professor at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash. A dabbler in game design, he approached (through agent Mike Davis) Peter Adkinson, president of Wizards of the Coast, with an idea for a board game called *RoboRally*. At the time, the company had only put out a few generic roleplaying products, and it was fighting for its young life in a copyright infringement lawsuit filed against it by Palladium, a rival game manufacturer. The lawsuit nearly drove the young company into the ground. WotC simply wasn't prepared to produce *RoboRally* because it had too many components.

Adkinson came back to Garfield, though, and asked him for, as Garfield puts it, "a game which is quick, with very little equipment." Within "a week or two," *Magic: The Gathering* was born.

Magic was released in August of 1993, and it was almost immediately a hit, taking everyone involved by surprise. A few weeks after its release at GenCon (the largest gaming convention in this hemisphere), it was clear that Wizards of the Coast had a hit on its hands.

As the months passed, it became obvious that the game was a runaway smash. *Magic* slowly started taking over comic book stores as the main generator of revenue. It started its own convention circuit. Its own national

"I've been given an opportunity to bring something special to the gaming world."

—Richard Garfield, *Magic* designer

The comic world is trying to catch the mighty *Magic* wave

Superhero CCGs

Comic books and card games: it was only a matter of time before someone crossed the two. Here's a quick list of the current crop of superhero collectible card games.

• ***Super Deck!*** from Card Sharks. The first to use superheroes to battle supervillains, it was considered a weak effort.

• ***Powercardz*** from Caliber Press features characters from Caliber's Skyverse (ironically, unpublished in comics). The big news was the company's license to produce the recently released *Spawn Powercardz*. Its follow-up, *Extreme Powercardz* (utilizing all of Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios' characters), is slated for a Spring '96 release.

• ***Marvel OverPower*** from Fleer. This one stars all of the great Marvel Comics characters. Its *PowerSurge* expansion set is in stores now, and is awaiting the *Mission Control* expansion set due out in March.

• ***WildStorms***, based on the Image Comics characters in Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions division (WildC.A.T.s, Gen[13], etc.), hit the stands in October. It featured mostly new art and some cool chase cards. A *Conflict!* expansion is due in February, followed by a player's guide and an unlimited edition (which is another term for a revised, readily available basic set) following in March.

• ***Chrysalis***, a card game based on Comico's relaunched superhero comic books. It should hit stores any day, now that the comics are back on the stands.

• ***DC OverPower*** from Fleer. While the game has been delayed indefinitely, players will be able to recreate the Marvel/DC crossover match-ups in their games by combining *Marvel OverPower* and *DC OverPower*, which can be played together. ■ *MF*

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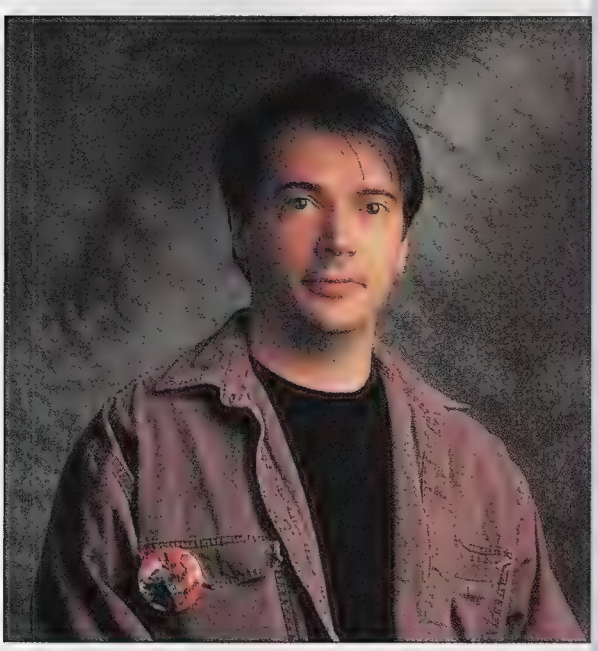

Fantasy fanboy: Richard Garfield, *Magic* game designer

tournaments. It was a whole new type of game, and it would soon inspire a host of imitators hoping to capture some of the original's greatness. To this date, none have come close, at least in terms of raw popularity.

The Man Behind the Game

Richard Garfield never thought he'd be where he is now. "I never wanted to be a professional game designer," Garfield says. "Even at 16, I realized it wasn't a good bet to stake your future on. It's not a particularly reliable field."

However, he did some serious game design in his spare time. Whether it be designing them from scratch or making alterations in *Trivial Pursuit* or checkers, he lived to make games that pleased himself and his friends. One friend, Mike Davis, thought enough of *RoboRally* to act as Garfield's agent in trying to sell the game. After seven years of trying, he finally got around to a relatively young and unknown Wizards of the Coast.

RoboRally's rejection now seems like a little more than a speed bump, but it's what got Garfield in the door. (And yes, WotC has since published the game.) With Adkinson's prodding, Garfield conceived the idea of a trading card game, and so spawned an entire industry.

Magic's roots go back further than that, says Garfield. "I actually had a card game I called *Magic* that I'd been toying with for eight years before. The final product became a lot different when I adapted it to the idea of a trading card game, but that's where a lot of the flavor came from. That's why the flavor often seems deeper than two years could justify."

Now 32, Garfield acts as WotC's coordinator of table game research and development. And he still enjoys working on games. In the next year, he plans to design some networked computer games as well as some new CCGs. He spends a moment searching for the right words before saying, "I feel like I'm really *building* something. I've been given an opportunity to bring something special to the gaming world."

The Secret of Magic's Success

"The most important factor," says Peter Adkinson, "and I don't mean to sound flippant, is it's a good game. It's fun to play. I think that's the first requirement of any game, that when people sit down and play it they have a good time. How you get that to happen is a big mystery."

Magic-ese

Sooo…what language is it that *Magic* gamers speak? "Mana burn"? "Tap"? "Who ripped one?" Well, to help ease you into the gaming waters, we've whipped up a no-nonsense guide to *Magic*-talk. Just study up on the below phrases and the gaming natives will take to you like an Atog to an Onulet. (Li'l *Magic* humor there. You'll get it one day.) Anyhoo…

Artifact: A tool or weapon, like a sword you can arm your creatures with or arrows you can shoot at unfriendly creatures. Can only be brought into play on your turn.
Artifact Creature: A "living" tool, like an animated statue that can attack or a mechanical beast that beats you with more than its springs. Can only be brought into play on your turn.
Casting Cost: How much mana you need to tap in order to successfully bring a spell into play.
Cheese: Taking your opponent out in an unsportsman-like manner, like hitting him with a 10-point Fireball when he's down to 10 life.
COP: Short for Circle of Protection, a common white enchantment which protects you from damage.
Creature: A monster or warrior. Can only be brought into play on your turn.
Direct Damage: Hitting your opponent directly with a spell, like the cheese example given above.
Enchantment: A spell that, unlike an instant or interrupt (described below), stays in play until it is destroyed. Can only be brought into play on your turn.
Expansion Set: Every six months or so there are new *Magic* sets released introducing new cards to the game.
Graveyard: Where a card from play goes after it's killed or discarded.
Instant: A spell that can be brought into play on either your turn or your opponent's turn.
Interrupt: A spell that can be cast on either your turn or your opponent's turn. Slightly different than an Instant spell in that it's "faster," but don't worry about it until you get more familiar with the game.
Library: The stack of cards you draw from.
Mana: The spell points you need to bring cards into play, usually drawn by tapping the different colored lands, though some creatures and artifacts provide mana.
Mana Burn: What happens if you tap mana and don't use it. You take a point of damage for every unspent point of mana.
Mana Pool: The place where all your tapped mana (spell points) goes while you're deciding what to play.
Out of Play: When a card is removed from the game, it does not go to the graveyard—it goes out of play and cannot be used again until the next game.
Pay the Upkeep: You have to pay all of your creatures' upkeep costs.
Power/Toughness: On the lower right hand of creature cards are two numbers: the first number indicates how many points of damage it hits for; the second, how much damage it can take before it's killed.
SizzleLean: Not a *Magic* term, but a damn-fine breakfast product.
Summoning Sickness: What creatures have when they are brought into play. Creatures may not attack nor tap to use a special ability until they *begin* a turn on your side, unless the card specifically states otherwise.
Tap: Turning a card sideways, signifying that you are using it for some purpose (i.e., an attack or you're using its special ability).
Tim: Slang term for the blue creature called the Prodigal Sorcerer, since he bears an unsettling resemblance to John Cleese, who played Tim the Sorcerer in "Monty Python and the Holy Grail."
Untap: To turn a card vertical after it's been tapped.
Weenie: A creature with a small power/toughness, usually a 1/1.

■ *Jim Nazium*

THE ULTIMATE KILLER DECK!

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Still, there are some things you can pin down with *Magic*. "The whole format was original," he continues. "It was the first trading card game. The idea of a game being published in a trading card format implies all sorts of things: portability, fast play, nice artwork, a good price point—if you're getting *started*, anyway," he laughs.

"You can play it in a confined space. You can play it in a restaurant while you're waiting for your meal. It's cool. It's something you can do while you're waiting for something else, in whatever spare time you may have."

"Comic books have lost out to game cards."

—Steve Milo, president of American Entertainment

The Effects

The *Magic: The Gathering* earthquake rocked the adventure gaming world, but the aftershocks didn't stop there. Entire new distributors and retail stores sprang up overnight selling absolutely nothing but collectible card games (CCGs). The CCG industry literally went from a nonexistent category to at least a $200 million business in only two years.

According to Steve Milo, president of American Entertainment (the owners of the chain of Another Universe comic book stores), "*Magic* has captured the excitement and freshness that the trading card market had in the mid-'80s and that the comic book market had in the early '90s. That's directly translated into stealing away many new entry-level [comic book] consumers."

Contrary to what some insiders predicted early on in the CCG craze, games like *Magic* don't seem to have hurt more traditional forms of gaming like roleplaying games. "The entire gaming market is up," Milo states. "Our stores split their game sales into a roleplaying game category and a card game category, and both categories are up. At least in our stores, the traffic generated by the card game category creates a subset of customers who then move into the roleplaying games."

But, Milo says, comics are on the losing end of the CCG success story. "Comic books have lost out to game cards because comics are not a good value," he says. "The average comic now is $2.50. The value, compared to a game—which can have almost endless play—is just not comparable."

Diamond Comic Distributor's Bill Schanes has a similar view of the market. "I think that CCGs have totally revolutionized and revitalized the game business," he says. "I think it's brought a lot of excitement—and a lot of new younger players—back into the business, which is good for everyone concerned. It really benefited the retailers who have seen their customer base expanded by this new set of consumers. It's helped them to be able to diversify their product line at a time when comics sales aren't quite as strong as they used to be."

Schanes has hopes that CCGs can help out the comic book end of things. "I think it helps that Acclaim Comics is doing some *Magic* comics. You've got some good crossover buying tendencies there." Hopefully these comics will lure some of the vast horde of *Magic* fans out there into pursuing comics as a hobby too. (See sidebar.)

The Future

When you've already got a phenomenon, what do you do next? "We love games," says Adkinson. "I see us being in this gaming business and really trying to get better and better at it. We're exploring some new areas, particularly the area of events: tournaments, leagues, conventions. I think there's a lot of new ground in the whole field of gaming in the area of competition and games in a large social setting with lots of people interacting and playing something you normally couldn't do at home. We want to explore that."

Recently, Wizards of the Coast decided to close down all of its departments except those dealing with CCGs. "This is going to really free us up to do some new things instead of things that were already being done," says Garfield. "We need a lot of resources to focus on events if we're going to do it right."

Garfield admits he didn't have any faith in the adventure gaming industry when he designed *Magic* and *RoboRally*, which is the reason he wasn't in it. "There was some good stuff floating around, but there was a lot of garbage too," he says. "A lot of good games get bounced around that are never published. It's hard to make a profit, even off a good game.

"But I think the industry is getting a lot more people into it [through CCGs and the like], and that's one of my goals. If we're successful at that, the industry could have a renaissance."

Matt Forbeck is a frequent contributor to InQuest, *as well as a co-designer of the* WildStorms *card game.*

Four-Color Magic

The folks at Acclaim Comics believe in *Magic*. Despite low sales, Acclaim is hoping to jump-start fan appeal in its *Magic:The Gathering* comic books since acquiring the license last year.

And line editor Jeff Gómez takes issue with the low sales stat. "The stores that display the comics in tandem with contests and tournaments and are racking the comics with the game are doing really well with the comics. The comics do particularly well with the female audience, which I think is fantastic."

But the low numbers are telling enough for Acclaim to cut its output from three *Magic* comics per month down to one, and move toward the larger 64-page Prestige Format. "We've found that the fans want to see and learn more about the *Legends* characters," Gómez says, "so we're going to give them some! All these comics will run about 44–47 pages of comic book storytelling, with 8–12 pages of articles, 'Seer's Analysis' columns, and things like that."

January leads off with *The Legend of the Fallen Angel*. It's written by fantasy writer Nancy Collins with art by *Magic* card artist Richard Kane-Ferguson. A Fallen Angel card from the *Chronicles* expansion set—which originally appeared in the *Legends* expansion—will be packaged with the comic.

February follows with *The Legend of Dakkon Blackblade*, written by Gómez and Steve Kernard, who created the *Legends* expansion set. In March, comic book writer/artist Bill Sienkiewicz brings us the two-part *Urza-Mishra War*, a sequel to Acclaim's *Antiquities War* mini-series. In April comes the sequel to Acclaim's *Ice Age* mini-series; it features characters that will actually cross over into the flavor text on the cards in an upcoming *Ice Age* expansion set. For the first time, the comics are influencing the cards upon which they're based.

Gómez promises even bigger things from Acclaim and Wizards of the Coast for the end of this summer. "And when I say Acclaim, I don't just mean comics," hints Gómez, making a thinly veiled reference to the comic company's parent, the video game giant. You heard it here first. ■ *MF*

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The Shi Haiku Contest

Hey! Not only is Shi one of the most popular comic characters around these days, but she's (Shi's?) also Japanese. So we figure now's as good a time as any to get multicultural and salute Shi in the tradition of her homeland.

So How Are We A-Gonna Do That?

Easy. We're going to write a poem about Shi. But not just any poem—we're going to write a haiku, the traditional Japanese form of poetry. What is haiku, you ask? Simple. It's a poem that has three lines, none of which have to rhyme. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables and the last line has five syllables again. And guess what? We want *you* to write a haiku about Shi. Here's an example. Ahem!

"Shi uses her sword
And leaves her mark on the wall
Each Tuesday at four."

Okay, that's a *real* crummy example. (Actually, it downright blows!) But you get the picture. Now do yours. The best haiku (that's plural in this case here) will walk away with some great loot.

GREAT LOOT

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive his haiku incorporated into a personalized original Shi drawing done by Shi creator Bill Tucci! And, as if that weren't enough to inspire the poet in you, we'll even kick in a swell-as-hell Shi cold cast statue!

Second Prize (10): Ten Runners-Up, who are pretty poetic but not quite Walt Whitman, will each receive a copy of the *Shi: Senryaku* hardcover edition.

This contest is sponsored by Crusade Entertainment, a bunch of poets at heart.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your haiku, put it in an envelope and send it off to: Shi Haiku Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is March 31, 1996.

The Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Crusade Entertainment and their immediate families or anyone who's been published in those snooty poetry magazines like Diane Chambers used to read on "Cheers." Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your haiku. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Shi Haiku Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. None of that nasty limerick "There once was a man from Nantucket..." stuff, either! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on April 15, 1996. Hey, maybe you'll get a nice surprise on tax day.

For a list of winners, available after April 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Shi Haiku Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The Shi Haiku Contest!

DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Favorite Muse _____

CHARACTER PROFILE: GREEN LANTERN

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Kyle Rayner
AGE: 23
HEIGHT: 6'
WEIGHT: 175 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Black
EYE COLOR: Brown
FIRST APPEARANCE: *Green Lantern* (current series) #48 (as Kyle Rayner); *Green Lantern* (current series) #50 (as Green Lantern)
TITLE CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Green Lantern* (DC)
ENEMIES: Parallax, Dr. Polaris, Sonar, Mr. Freeze

ORIGIN

The guy we now know as Green Lantern wasn't always the emerald hero. In fact, Kyle Rayner's rise to become Green Lantern relied heavily on the downfall of his predecessor as GL, Hal Jordan.

Hal went mad because his hometown of Coast City was completely destroyed by the villains Mongul and the Cyborg Superman. After failing to rebuild his city with his power ring, Hal abruptly turned against everything he stood for as a hero. His rampage stretched from Earth to Oa, home of the Guardians of the Universe, and the source of power for the entire Green Lantern Corps. On his way to Oa, Hal challenged and stomped on all the other Green Lanterns, robbing them of their rings, and leaving them for dead. The Guardians made a valiant effort, but ultimately fell to Hal's powerful rage. Before they fell, though, they transferred all their remaining power to Ganthet, the last surviving Guardian.

Hal then absorbed the vast energies from Oa's central power battery, becoming the almost godlike Parallax. Unnoticed by Hal, Ganthet reassembled one final Green Lantern ring, and fled to Earth. Ganthet arrived on Earth, giving the ring to first person he met. That person was Kyle Rayner, a down-on-his-luck freelance artist, whom Ganthet encountered in a Los Angeles alley. Ganthet gave Kyle the last ring and told him to do what he must: become the one true Green Lantern.

After receiving the ring, Kyle quickly learned about the responsibility that comes with such power, when his longtime girlfriend Alex was brutally murdered by Major Force, who was employed by an organization that wanted Kyle's ring for its own.

Devastated, Kyle tried to start his life over by moving to New York City, and shortly thereafter joined The New Titans. It was there he met Donna Troy, a Titan and Darkstar, and a romance soon blossomed.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Time and again, Kyle has proven himself to be a hero in all senses of the word, whether it meant not killing Major Force when he had the chance, or single-handedly stopping Dr. Polaris' Christmas rampage through the streets of New York.

Since becoming GL, Kyle has gone against Parallax for the right to be called Green Lantern; Ganthet, too, got involved by calling in the big gun heroes of the DC Universe. Though Kyle put everything he had into the battle, even standing up against Parallax unpowered, the heroes were vanquished. Seeing Kyle's determination and character, Parallax retreated, and Kyle was accepted as Green Lantern by the other heroes of the DC Universe.

Kyle's other adventures have taken him to the other side of the universe and back with the Titans, and teamed him up with The Flash against Sonar. His talent as an artist has enabled him to create several unique weapons with his ring, while his youth, intelligence and sense of humor has caused him to face each battle with a combination of irreverence and seriousness.

Recently, Kyle had a major disagreement with Donna, and they parted company. Since that time, Kyle has been roaming the DC Universe, seeking out its mightiest heroes in an effort to learn more about what being called a "hero" is all about.

Throughout all the run-ins with evil and despite the great power he wields, Kyle has remained one of the DC Universe's brightest flames of nobility and character.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

According to *Green Lantern* writer Ron Marz, future plans for Kyle include more traditional Green Lantern team-ups, 1996-style. "Issues #76 and #77 will be two parts of a four-part team-up with the new Green Arrow," Marz says. "There's a connection, thanks to their predecessors, between the mantles of Green Arrow and Green Lantern, and that's something I've wanted to explore for a long time. Just as Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams [the former *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* writer/artist team] tackled some big social issues with the original characters, we're going to do some stuff that will make people sit up and take notice."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Like what you've read so far? Ron Marz tells you to check out these primo issues of *Green Lantern*:

- ***Green Lantern* #0**—Here, Kyle and Hal go toe-to-toe for the right to be Green Lantern. In a both philosophical and physical battle royale, Kyle proves himself to be Green Lantern and, as Kyle notes at the end of the story, "Everybody better get used to the idea."
- ***Guy Gardner: Warrior* #27-#28, *Green Lantern* #60**—In the three-part "Capital Punishment," Kyle proves that the truly good guys don't kill the bad guy at the end of the fight.
- ***Green Lantern* #63 and #64**—It's Hal vs. Kyle one more time. This time, the whole neighborhood gets involved, and Kyle proves himself in front of Superman, Aquaman, Hawkman, Green Arrow, Flash and J'onn J'onzz.
- ***Green Lantern* #66 and #67**—Flash and Kyle meet for the first time, but they don't exactly get along as much as their predecessors did.
- ***Green Lantern* #70**—Kyle and Donna Troy break up in one of the most believable splits in comics. You'll want to send flowers to Donna, and call Kyle to see if he's all right. If you've had one too many bittersweet breakups in your life, bring the tissues.

SIMILAR TASTES

If you dig stories about average Joes with way-cool powers doing the best they can in really strange situations, some other books you may want to check out are: *The Flash*, *The Ray*, *Superboy* and *Robin* from DC Comics, and *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* from Marvel Comics. Marz himself says, "They're all young heroes, and all are a little more hip to what's going on today. Also, I would pick *Starman*. I try to make *Green Lantern* a very character-driven book, and I think *Starman* is the most character-driven book out there." W

Matthew Brady, who wrote the Maxx profile in issue #54, has volunteered to see Donna through this rough period in her life. She hasn't called yet, though.

Greg Capullo's

KRASH COURSE

CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS!

I know what you're all thinking: "An *Italian* is gonna teach me how to control emotions? Yeah, right!" True, if this were therapy, I'd be the last guy to preach. Being of Italian descent, I am *very* emotional. In fact, I'm such a neurotic loon, I can go from laughing to crying to shoving my fist down your throat before you can say "pizza"! However, when it comes to controlling the emotions of comic characters, I can say (without modesty) that I'm damn good at it!

Being able to portray emotion in your characters is vital. It's what brings them to life and makes them seem real enough so that we can relate to them on an emotional level. We all experience a host of emotions on a daily basis. Whether it's the unbridled joy you get from your little sister screaming bloody murder 'cause you just plucked a hair from her head when she wasn't looking, or the horror and pain you feel as she rips up your very favorite comic book in deserved retaliation for your egregious act—that's emotion! You feel it, I feel it, we all feel it and can relate to it. When we experience emotion, our whole body reflects what we feel inside. You can often tell what someone else is feeling because of this fact. So this month, Uncle Greggy is gonna give you some pointers on breathing emotional life into your characters. Soon, you too will be yelling like Doc Frankenstein, "It's alive! It's alive!"

1. face facts

Let's start with the face. Your face is filled with many muscles that can contort your mug into a million different expressions. (If you're Jim Carrey. .two million, easily.) Eyebrows, eyelids, nostrils and the mouth. They can either work together or independently of each other to properly portray our innermost feelings.

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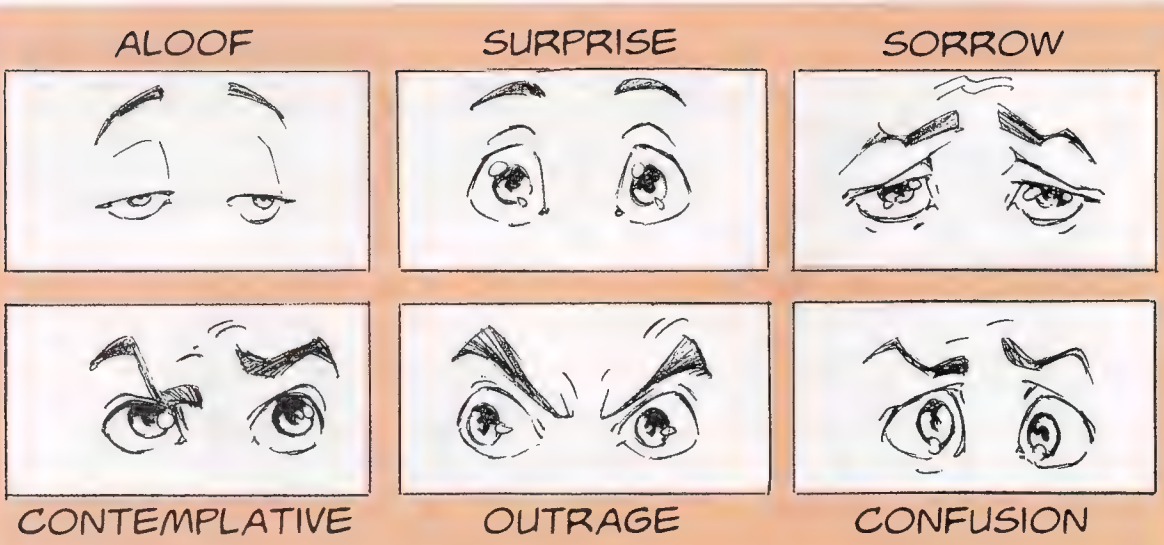
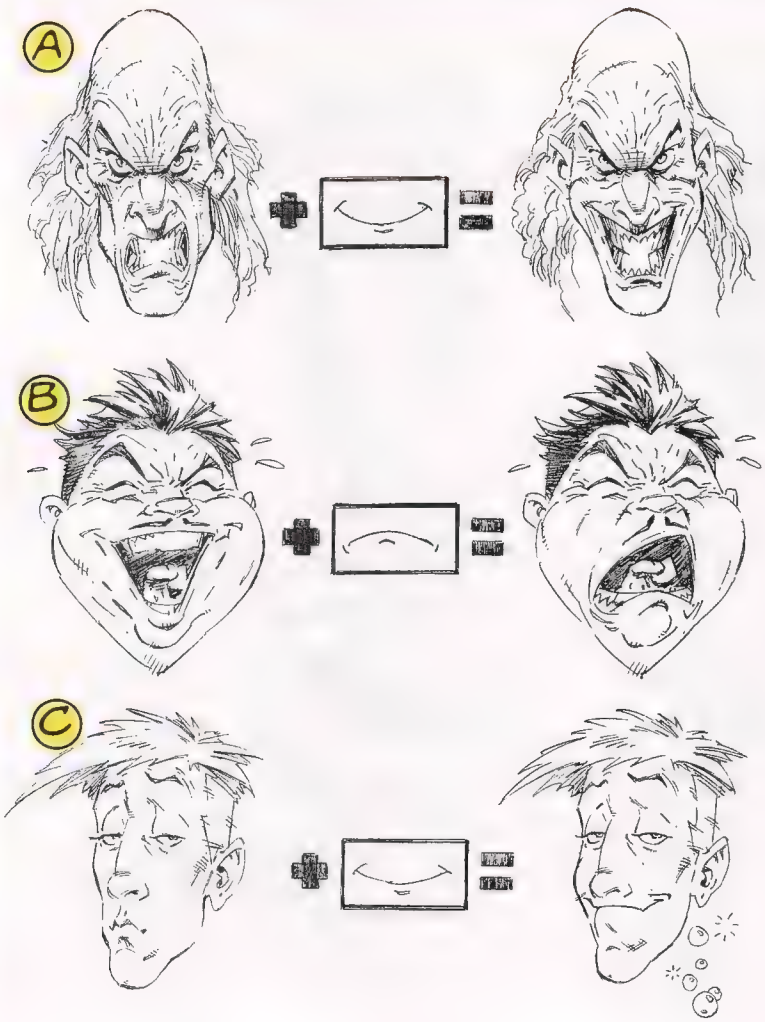


2. 'eye ain't got no body'

To me, the eyes are particularly expressive. They alone can reveal a lot about what we feel. However, the eyes can be deceiving if viewed apart from the rest of the face. For example, take a pair of sorrowful eyes. If you were to stick them in a microwave, they could pop within seconds, spreading all this cool goop around inside that's really tough to clean off! (Just kidding, parents!) Viewed alone, a pair of sorrowful eyes would of course indicate sorrow. However, if you were to combine those eyes with a very slight smile, you would be changing the expression to one of sympathy or compassion. Let me demonstrate.



3. facelift

In example A on the left, we have a mean, angry face. Now, without changing any features other than his mouth, we get a fiendish, somewhat diabolical-looking face. Incidentally, if we then gave him floating irises, we would have a maniacal or psychotic expression. But I digress. In example B, our man is laughing uproariously. But just change his mouth, and he's crying as if he's just been banned from the all-you-can-eat buffet table! (Oh, the power! I am drunk with power!) Example C has our boy looking a bit aloof—indifferent and uninterested in the events around him. Change just his mouth and he begins to exhibit the look of pleasant satisfaction from having just farted in the bathtub! As you can see, how you make the facial features relate to each other is very important. Combinations are endless. Each slight modification brings out new expressions. Have some fun by experimenting this way. Draw as many combinations as you can come up with and many secrets will be unlocked for you.

4. show of hands

Being Italian, I talk with my hands a lot. The hands possess a lot of personality and can help convey several emotions quite nicely. They can work together to accentuate the emotion being portrayed. Even the positioning of the hand matters! Notice how the same hand held in a different position changes what that hand—or person—is saying! Kinda neat when you think about it.

5. bodies in motion

As I said earlier, the whole body reflects our emotions. Take a look at this collection of gestural studies and see if you can recognize the emotions being portrayed. In conveying emotion, it's important that you be able to reduce—to its simplest form—the movement of the body. The posture needs to be as easily recognizable as any facial expression you may use. A terrified person, for instance, wouldn't be leaning toward the perceived danger; he would be leaning away from it. A proud or arrogant person wouldn't be slumping forward when talking with someone; he'd be standing very erect. (Look at how I placed some arrows by the figures to help you out with this.) Try to use the types of lines that best describe the particular emotion you're trying to convey.

6. mirror, mirror on the wall...

When you're first starting out without much experience under your belt, the task of portraying emotion can be very difficult. Don't be ashamed to recruit the aid of a mirror and pose for yourself. Grab a sketch pad and do quick gestural drawings while watching movies. Draw from real life and photographs too. I used to wear a pair of sunglasses so people didn't know I was watching them. Then I'd head downtown with a sketch pad in hand to render my unsuspecting models. Above all, try to feel what your character would be feeling. What would your face look like? I still catch myself wearing expressions that I'm giving my characters as I draw them; you can try this as well. In fact, you can probably catch many artists with this habit.

When it comes to comic books, remember this axiom: "It's better to have your character overact than underact."

And now, a message for the punks out there: Portraying emotion is more than just drawing faces with teeth clenched in anger! For the rest of you, keep the lead burnin', tough guys! W

Greg Capullo can be seen every month penciling Spawn, *published by Image Comics.*

DRAWING BOARD

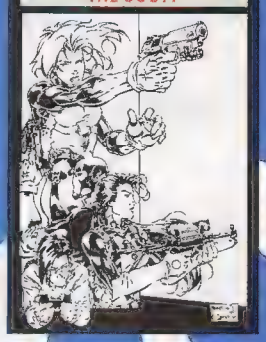
Who needs the pros? This is the show for **Wizard Readers' Art**

Welcome to the special all-Bad Girls edition of Drawing Board! The eight cool folks whose artwork scored an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Justice League Task Force* #0 signed by Mark Waid and an *Amazing Spider-Man* #390 signed by Mark Bagley. Each of the three talented runners-up will receive a *Supergirl* #1 signed by Roger Stern, a *Generation X* #2 signed by Chris Bachalo and a Lady Rawhide *Wizard* mini-comic signed by Don McGregor. Arne Ratermanis, the outstanding artist of the winning entry this month, will receive all that super stuff, plus the original art from the cover to WildStorm's *Black Ops* #1 by Dan Norton (thanks a ton, Dan)! Congrats to all you people!

THE ARTIST

ARNE RATERMANIS

THE BOOTY



GRAND PRIZE

AMERICAN MAID **Arne Ratermanis** San Diego, CA

RUNNERS-UP

LADY DEATH, CYBERNARY & SHI **Joe Rhoney** Susanville, CA

LADY DEATH **Chris Long** Claymont, DE

PSYLOCKE **Lee Weng Kok** Happy Garden, Malaysia

HONORABLE MENTIONS

AEON FLUX
Calvin Armstrong
New York, NY

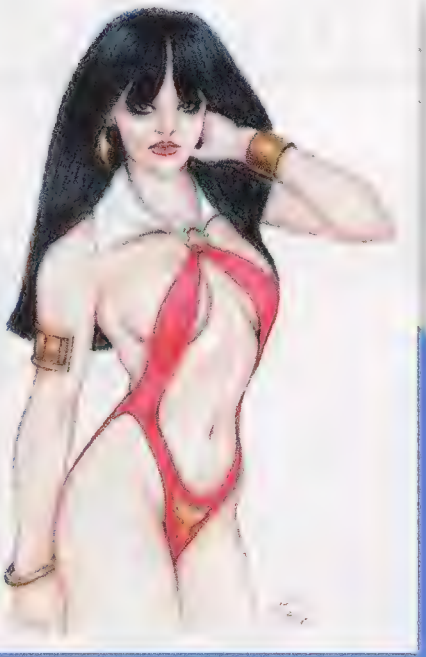
SHE-WEAPON X
Toni Masdiono
Bandung, Indonesia

ANFELLA
Ron Riley
Prince Albert, Sk., Canada

ROGUE
Daniel Rodriguez
Fort Worth, TX

DRAWING BOARD

VAMPIRELLA
Steven Benes
Redding, CA



SHI, MANGA-STYLE
Michael Coppolecchia Jr.
Ventnor City, NJ

X-GIRLS
Jeff Stearns
Kelowna, B.C., Canada

WONDER WOMAN
Jim Jefferson
Hopkinsville, KY

Want your art to appear on one of these four pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your Drawing Board entries to:

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

Entries can be e-mailed to WizardTGTC@aol.com (Please use an EPS or TIFF format @ 300 dpi.). And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? Good luck!

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

Below you'll find the brand-new look for "Homemade Heroes," but this month's winners will score the same ol' awesome prizes! Each of 'em, who transformed ordinary figures and materials into these cool creations (which are all the heroines you love this month, in honor of Valentine's Day), will receive a Mattel toy three-pack and a copy of *Cyberforce* #2 signed by Marc Silvestri. The two Runners-Up will also get a *Cyberforce* #3 signed by Silvestri in addition to the above goodies, and the megatalented Grand Prize Winner gets all that stuff *plus* a limited-edition Ballistic Polystone statue from Mattel. A huge congrats to everyone!

An immense thank you to those fine Mattel folks for their generous donation of prizes. You people are the marshmallows in our cocoa!

GRAND PRIZE

LADY DEATH & SHI
Jerry Beyer
New Richmond, WI

THE WINNER

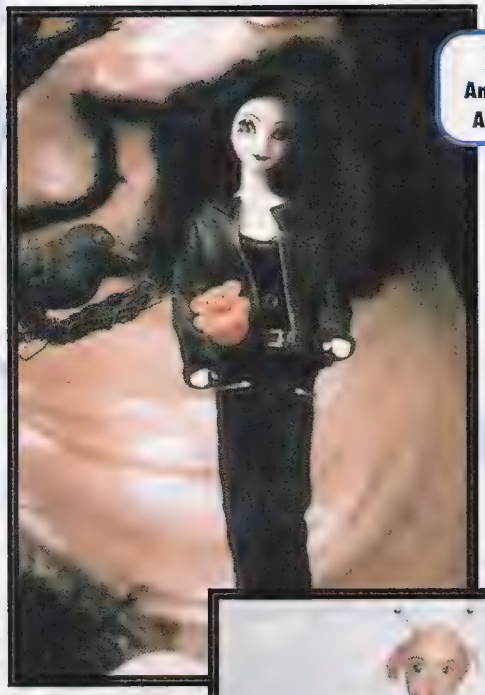
JERRY BAYER

RUNNER-UP

MYSTIQUE
Crystal Avery
Newport, NC

RUNNER-UP

WONDER WOMAN
Michael Williamson
Wilmington, NC

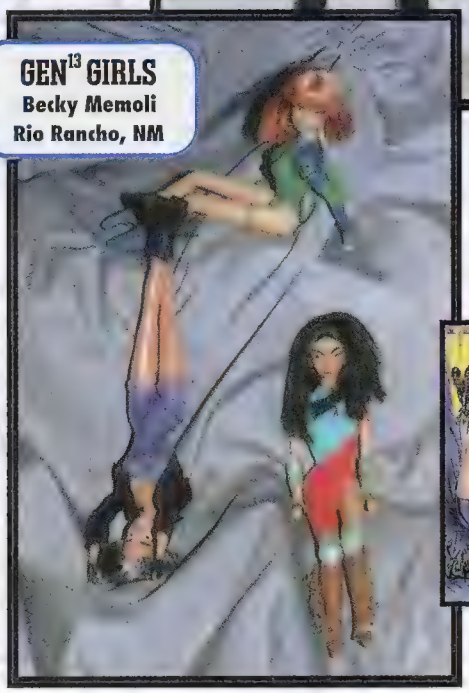


DEATH
Amy DeCarlo
Albany, NY

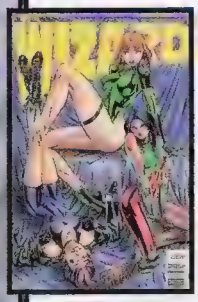
AEON FLUX
Tom Lotz
Naples, FL

TANK GIRL
Jason Flischel
Hallsville, MO

DIRTY PAIR
Megan Burns
Chicago, IL



GEN[13] GIRLS
Becky Memoli
Rio Rancho, NM



HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send a well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids!) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

scene

A guide to Japanese comics and animation.

by Carl Gustav Horn

the fanboys of manga

Its only film, "The Wings of Honneamise," has been voted the favorite anime of all time for the past three years on the Internet's rec.arts.anime poll. It's the anime studio of unparalleled coolness that many American fans relate to the most. And its first work in four years, the TV show "Neon Genesis Evangelion," is now on the air in Japan and the target of the hottest bidding war of the season among American anime companies eager to bring it over. The company's name is Gainax—the empire of the otaku.

Otaku—our closest translation would be "fanboy," and some Americans are starting to use this Japanese word, pushing it towards the dangerous cliff edge of pop-culture hipness at whose bottom lies a big, soft pile of flannel shirts. But it's something you don't call yourself in Japan, especially if you're actually in the industry, where anime studios try to "work the fan out" of their new hires. Only, the folks at Gainax have managed to make names for themselves as professionals, yet they never apologize for remaining obsessed fans to this day—something made possible by their unique history.

Gainax never went to Tokyo to do grunt work in the industry; instead the company started as a group of kids at a technical college in the gritty, gangster-ridden city of Osaka. In 1981, the kids made their first four-minute anime film out of industrial plastic sheets they cut into the size of anime cels and shot frame by frame on a home 8mm camera—studio equipment not being part of their $100 budget.

Although they enjoyed success selling their homemade anime and associated merchandise through cons, mail order and even their own store, Gainax's breakthrough was with 1983's "Daicon IV Opening Anime," an MTV-inspired music video that marked them as the biggest "unsigned" anime talent in Japan. Bandai, Japan's largest toy company (and the bankroll behind "Sailor Moon") approached them. The kids had dreamed of making a 30-minute anime video based on retelling the story of the first man in space on an alternate world, but Bandai's deep pockets meant that they could actually put out a real two-hour film, and jump directly from 8mm to 35mm.

Learn the story of the first man to walk on another world in "The Wings of Honneamise."

At 800 million yen, the film, "The Wings of Honneamise," was the most expensive anime ever made, but writer/director Hiroyuki Yamaga's introspective realist approach proved a disaster with audiences who were looking for romantic adventure.

"Honneamise" had to be satisfied with sweeping the critics' awards and gaining gradual fan respect (it finally made back its money for Bandai in September 1994), especially in the United States, where it was praised by *The Washington Post* and Roger Ebert during its belated 1994-1995 American film release. "Honneamise" is available on video from Manga Entertainment in both

a dubbed and a somewhat easier-to-figure subtitled version.

Deciding that they needed to try a different approach after "Honneamise," Gainax rebounded in 1988 with "Aim for the Top! Gunbuster," an idea writer Toshio Okada sold as "cute girls in bathing suits bouncing around fighting space monsters." In fact, "Gunbuster," available on video here (subtitled from U.S. Renditions), was a three-hour epic in six parts that tore the giant-robot genre apart and put it back together, beginning as a parody and developing into a serious man vs. alien conflict reminiscent of both Joe Haldeman and Robert Heinlein.

It was Gainax's first success, and it set the stage for its smash hit TV show "Nadia" in 1990, a Jules Verne-inspired adventure (with cute girls) set in an alternate 1889 (available dubbed in the U.S. through Streamline Pictures under the title "The Secret of Blue Water"). For the first time, Gainax was getting both the critical acclaim and the big money. In 1991, though, at the company's high tide, Gainax again did the unexpected (and the unpopular) with the 100-minute long "Otaku no Video" (available here subtitled through AnimEigo), a scathingly honest self-parody of fan obsessions combining anime with character designs by *Gun Smith Cats*' Kenichi Sonoda (an old Gainax crony who worked on "Honneamise") with live-action interviews purporting to be "Hard Copy"-like exposés of otaku. Some call it anime's "Spinal Tap," but it proved to be too much perspective for the Japanese public, which wasn't prepared to hear it like it really was.

After that, the members of Gainax couldn't find the spirit to do another anime for four years, and turned their offbeat creativity to making PC games, which—unlike their anime—they own the rights to. In 1992, they released their most famous game, *Princess Maker*, which could be described as a sort of *Sim-Daughter* (its sequel, *Princess Maker 2*, has just been licensed as an English version by Maryland's Adventions—contact David Leary at dleary@umabnet.ab.umd.edu for details). Several corporations, including the electronics giant Pioneer, approached Gainax during this period to finance new anime. But, according to Okada, unlike most professional studios which churn out anime according to schedule whether good or not, Gainax will not create, unless everybody's heart is in it—everything they do is a group effort that Okada calls "controlled chaos."

above: Anime's attempt at "Spinal Tap"
below: Promo shot for "Wings of Honneamise"

It wasn't until October of 1995 that Gainax broke its anime silence with the TV show "Neon Genesis Evangelion," where writer/director Hideaki Anno has sworn to do something new with the giant robot genre (with cute girls). Inspired in part by Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, aliens claiming to be messengers of God—yeah, *that* God—give us a little taste of apocalypse in the year 2000 by smacking a meteor into Antarctica, melting the ice cap and changing the Earth's climate. Fifteen years later, the survivors find themselves tested by the alien angels in the newly built Tokyo-3. The still-developing plot is beginning to

combine elements of biotechnology with Kabbalistic mysticism, which may prove a winner in an America that's rapidly getting into both anime and X-Files-type weirdness. The U.S. rights may be settled by the time this sees print, but the show is already getting a tremendous buzz from those lucky enough to have rented it in their Japantowns. Hear Gainax's empire calling...

(Special thanks to Toshio Okada and Gainax for their contributions to this article.) W

Carl Horn is to manga what Chef Boyardee is to pasta!

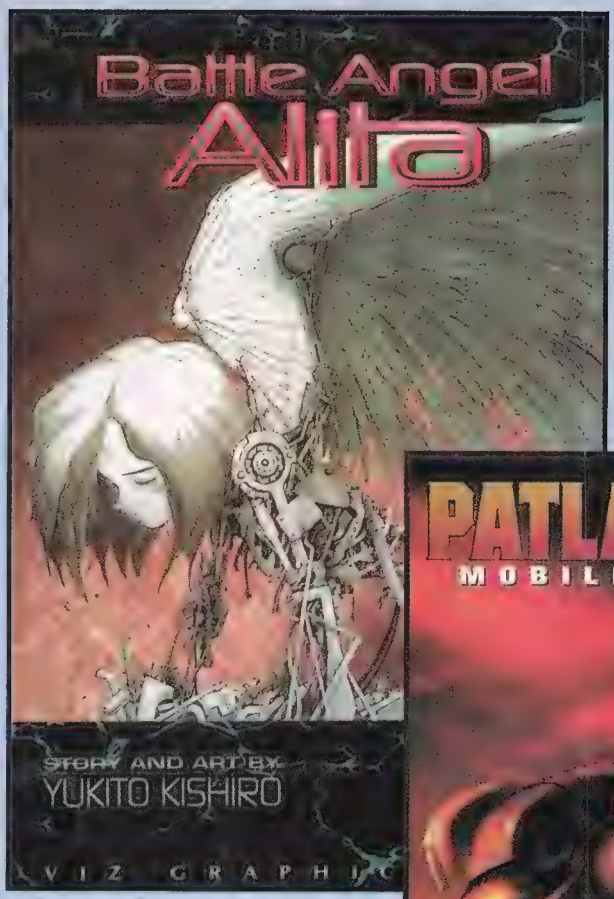
picks of the month

manga:

Battle Angel Alita

(Viz Comics, $2.75, monthly, b&w)

This comic has been around for a long while, and if you haven't noticed it, shame on you. You'll shake your head in wonder at Yukito Kishiro's outrageous, supercharged tale of Alita, the petite cyborg hunter-warrior of a dark junkheap of a future reminiscent of "Mad Max" and "Rollerball." Kishiro's art style is clean, technically detailed and full of action. He can pull off a stunning 10-page "silent" combat scene without dialogue or sound effects, and then come back at you with such Captain America-vs.-The Red Skull exchanges as "You forget...you're completely vulnerable from above!" "I forget NOTHING!" If you remember Eagle Comics' 1980s *Robo-Hunter* fondly, this combination of wild robotic weaponry, black comedy and ultraviolence (cyborgs: hard and armored on the outside, soft and squishy on the inside) is for you, with its back issues available in Viz's sharp-looking graphic novels.

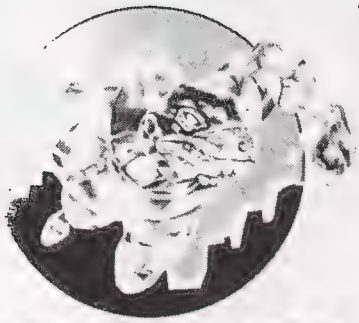


video:

Patlabor 2

(Manga Entertainment, subtitled or dubbed, 108 minutes, $29.95/$19.95, now available)

Those looking for an anime reminiscent of Tom Clancy will find that *Patlabor 2*'s realistic near-future story of political intrigue and military technology hits the target like a smart bomb. One evening, six years from now, the Tokyo Bay Bridge is blown up. This incident sends the Mobile Police's black-sheep unit SVII on the hunt for Tsuge, an ex-military officer, and part of a secret cabal of U.S. and Japanese conservatives who plotted to revive the arms race through a dummy air raid on Tokyo. But the live missile that hit the bridge wasn't in the plan, and Tsuge has now formed a splinter group with a hidden agenda. Move by move, they're kicking away the phony assumptions of Japan's current state of "peace." Few can be trusted in this hard-hitting and thought-provoking adult drama, beautifully animated by the same team that made "Ghost in the Shell."



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Malibu Comics Presents...

The Phoenix Aftermath Trivia Contest

Whoa! Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the comic store, suddenly the star-consuming, planet-destroying Phoenix entity is back! Back like a...uh...well, like a Phoenix from the ashes, we guess. But this time, it's popping up in Malibu's Ultraverse.

Yeah, that Phoenix is one megapowerful character. But you—yes, *you*—just might be the one with enough power to contain it, *if* you can answer the following questions. After all, knowledge is power, y'know.

How to Play

What you do is answer these easy trivia questions. Get 'em right and you could be one of the lucky winners to get some cool prizes.

1. Which Ultraverse character did the Phoenix first possess as a host body in *The Phoenix Resurrection: Genesis*?

2. Name: a. the world-devastating alien race in *Phoenix Resurrection: Aftermath*, and b. their one weakness.

3. Which character from the original (1993) *Exiles* mini-series does Foxfire encounter in *Foxfire* #1?

Rising from the Flame...the Prizes!

Grand Prize (1): One good-lookin' reader will have his or her likeness (taken from a photo that you supply after you're picked) appear in a future issue of *Foxfire*, and will also receive a page of original *Phoenix Resurrection: Aftermath* art by artist John Royle!

Second Prize (10): 10 winners will each get the complete set of *Phoenix Resurrection* books (all 10 of 'em) and a copy of *Foxfire* #1, all autographed by at least one of the creators.

Third Prize (20): An autographed copy of the new *Foxfire* #1. And it'll even be the variant edition! Ooogala! Ooogala! Ooogala!

This contest is sponsored by Malibu Comics, a company with the power to consume worlds.

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Phoenix Aftermath Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 15, 1996—so resurrect those brain cells fast!

World-Rending Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Malibu Comics and their immediate families or anyone from Phoenix, Arizona (we figure you'd have an unfair advantage). Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and your answers to the trivia questions on the official entry form, a standard postcard or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Phoenix Aftermath Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Residents of Scottsdale are perfectly eligible. Tuscon, too. All right, all right—you Phoenix people can enter, as well—don't start yellin'! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 15, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on April 30, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after April 30, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Malibu Phoenix Aftermath Trivia Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The Phoenix Aftermath Trivia Contest

DEADLINE IS APRIL 15, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

1. _____ 2a. _____

2b. _____ 3. _____

a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Maximum Wonder

"I chose to do comics so I could be happy with my work," says Bob Fingerman, creator of the semi-autobiographical series *Minimum Wage*. "I figured if I'm going to be doing this for the foreseeable future, I shouldn't be miserable."

Before he started *Minimum Wage*, Fingerman bounced from project to project and wasn't particularly happy. He created parody strips for various European anthologies and *Cracked* magazine, drew commercial illustrations, and even cartooned for several pornographic magazines. In 1994, he created *White Like She*, a realistically drawn, humorous sci-fi story put out by Dark Horse Comics, but the experience was not completely satisfying. "At that stage, I was refining my style to the point of the ridiculous. What I did was refine all of the enjoyment and spontaneity out of it, and it just became work."

Fingerman finally found his voice when he adopted the loose style he now uses on *Minimum Wage*. "I had always drawn cartoonier for my own amusement. Everything in my sketchbooks is kind of goofy-looking, so I thought, 'Why not? I'm going to scratch my own itch finally, and do something that's completely my own kind of thing.' I haven't regretted it, since I'm now drawing true to my own instincts. It seems that this style is much more well-liked than anything I've done before, because there's a sense of enjoyment that comes through in my artwork. I think people consequently have more fun looking at it."

Part of the fun of *Minimum Wage* is the vivid characters that Fingerman has created. Unlike other character-driven comics, *Minimum Wage* features a cast that is full of energy and life. Rob Hoffman, the main character of the series, is a frustrated cartoonist who must brave the wilds of New York City while making a living drawing cartoons for porno magazines. Rob has to keep his sanity as he deals with disgusting editors, tries to enjoy the city's nightlife and hunts for an apartment with his girlfriend, Sylvia Fanucci.

If Rob sounds similar to Fingerman, it's because he is. "I'd be completely lying if I said Rob wasn't just a really transparent stand-in for myself," Fingerman explains. "At the same time, since I'm portraying him as a 24-year-old, I'm kind of looking back on where I've been, as opposed to where I am now. I think I've got the benefit of hindsight to look back at both his foibles and his triumphs. Since he's not as far along as I am, I can see the humor, whereas maybe when things were happening to me, I would have thought that they were just terrible."

While *Minimum Wage* is partly based on Fingerman's life, he has made a point of avoiding the usual trappings of other autobiographical comics. "You don't need to see three panels of somebody sitting on the toilet reading or picking their nose. In some ways, I think there's a little too much of dealing with the minutia of daily life. *Minimum Wage* is a little bit broader in terms of avoiding stuff like that. Since everybody does go to the bathroom, I don't think it needs to be portrayed. None of my characters have sealed-over sphincters like Ken dolls, but I don't have to get into that."

Minimum Wage attempts to skip the overtly boring events in life, but that

Unlike other character-driven comics, *Minimum Wage* features a cast that is full of energy and life

Rob & Sylvia try to survive in the big city. Cover art from *Minimum Wage* #1.

by tom palmer, jr.

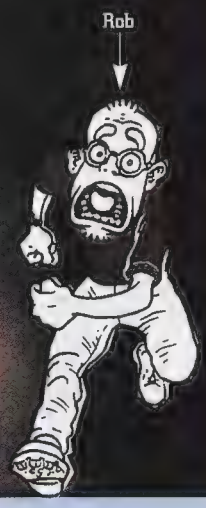
doesn't mean it's all fun and games. "There will be more of a balance of serious content mixed in with the humor as the series goes on. If there's no conflict, then there's no drama, and if there's no drama, you're going to lose interest. There's going to be more of an emphasis on the ups and downs, but I'm looking to keep the whole thing balanced so it doesn't get too heavy. I'm not going to turn this into a drama by any means, but there will be more dramatic content as it goes on."

Fingerman, who studied at the School of Visual Arts, has a bold drawing style that is full of details, yet easy on the eyes. As *Minimum Wage* takes place in New York City, Fingerman makes a point of placing recognizable landmarks like the Limelight, St. Mark's Comics, and the Vault in the background. "One thing I'm trying to do with this series is lend a certain atmosphere to the whole thing. I didn't want to make this look like Genericville, U.S.A., or the typical Marvel city where you have the typical Marvel tall office building. I just can't fake it. I've got all these photo albums of shots of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, because it definitely has its own flavor."

Readers in the New York area can pick out familiar locations, but there's a different sense of enjoyment for those who have never experienced the Big Apple. "For people who don't live in New York, it's fun to have stuff that they normally wouldn't see. For me, backgrounds aren't just backgrounds. They shouldn't be completely passive, they're part of the story, especially for something like *this* story. The background is integral to the whole thing. No detail is too small, but I also miss thousands of them, because I'm not Geof Darrow. Otherwise, there would be every brand-specific candy wrapper on the ground and I'd only put out one issue every three years."

Luckily, fans of *Minimum Wage* won't have to wait that long for the next installment in the lives of Rob and Sylvia. Fingerman has a rough idea of where the two of them will end up, but for now he's quite happy improvising. "When you're doing a series, I don't think it's a good idea to plan too far ahead. I don't know exactly where this is going to go. That's what will keep this fresh for me."

Contrary to published reports, Tom Palmer Jr. really is the hardest-working man in the comic book industry.



FYI

Minimum Wage debuted last summer as a 72-page black-and-white graphic novel from Fantagraphics Books. The regular series followed in the fall, and there are two issues out now, with the third due shortly. If you can't find *Minimum Wage* at your local comic store, you can contact the publisher at: Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, or you can call 1-800-657-1100 for a free catalog.

Bob Fingerman's Recommended Reading

"I love *Eightball* and *Hate*, but they certainly don't need a plug from me. Dave Cooper has a book called *Suckle* coming out, and it's incredible. It's a magnificent piece of work. He's boiled down his style where it's not quite as obsessively rendered. He's got a real good story, and I just think it's an amazing book. I also like that book *Preacher*. There's a real thing in the 'alternative community' where you can never plug anything that's mainstream, but I think there are some real good mainstream books. I've got no prejudices against the wonderful world of four-color comics."

Recommended Reading

IN CASE YOU MISSED:

Little Mister Man James Kochalka, the self-proclaimed superstar of mini-comics, penned this little gem that was recently published by Slave Labor. The concept of this story is simple enough: A superpowered boy must deal with the taunting of other kids and with his father's attempts to make him "normal." *Little Mister Man* seems silly and goofy at first glance, but it is full of wit and charm. Kochalka takes his simple concept and runs away with it. His artwork is incredibly simple, but that's what makes it so endearing. All three issues of *Little Mister Man* should still be available from Slave Labor Graphics, at 979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128, or you can call 1-800-866-8929 for a free catalog.

IN STORES NOW:

Tales from the Bog The second issue of newcomer Marcus Lusk's self-published, black-and-white series about the anthropomorphic denizens of a swamp should be out right now. Lusk has created a cast of wonderful characters, and he uses this series to show off his excellent storytelling abilities. He pays close attention to the small events in life, and he also has a loose and expressive cartooning style that fits perfectly with this comic. In case you can't find *Tales from the Bog* locally, you can order directly from Aberration Press at 416 Cahaba Park Circle, Suite 107-B, Birmingham, AL 35242. Sample issues are $2.95 and six-issue subscriptions are $18.

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

HULK LEADS COMIC BOOK MOVIE STORM

By Rob Allstetter

HE'S COMING FOR *YOU*! HULK WILL BE SMASHING THROUGH THE BIG SCREEN SOON.

When John Turman pitched his Incredible Hulk movie script to Universal, he brought along his beat-up copy of *Hulk* #1, which he had Jack Kirby sign a few years earlier.

"I just knew I wasn't going to get this job, so at the meeting, I told Stan Lee, 'Look, in case I don't see you again, can you sign this?' " Turman said.

Turman got Lee's signature—and the job. With the momentum of the Hulk script, he then wrote a Silver Surfer script for Constantin Film. And recently he sold producer Chuck Gordon and Universal on a Prime film.

Turman is equally excited and cautious about the films.

"I have mixed feelings. I'm a big fan of comic books and I'm also a fan of movies. I think sometimes to transfer from one medium to another just for the sake of making a buck, the entertainment suffers," he said.

"I want to be faithful to the kid inside me that's the comics fan. You feel responsible to a higher authority than just the job. But you have to realize that movies are a different medium."

Turman talked to *Wizard* about his various comic book-based movies:

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: Gale Anne Hurd is producing this for Universal. No director has been named yet, and Turman's script is being refined by Zack Penn, who wrote the original draft of "Last Action Hero."

"Everything that's gone on with the Hulk encourages me, because I'm working with really smart people that care about comics and like them—and [understand] the Hulk," Turman said. "I didn't have a chance of getting the job if they didn't [understand him]. I had fewer credits and a shorter history than anyone else. There were other screenwriters there with a lot of clout; I think that they really went with what they felt would be the best story, and I'm glad they thought it would be mine."

The movie should be more faithful to the Hulk mythos than the late '70s/early '80s television series, with an origin that's similar to—but updated from—the comics, and supporting characters like Thunderbolt Ross, Betty Ross, Rick Jones, Major Talbot and even a pre-gamma Doc Samson. The villain will be the Leader.

"He's a third-rate scientist or engineer who suddenly gets very smart," Turman said of the Hulk's foe. "On one level he becomes smarter than Banner, but he lacks that inspiration that still makes Banner something special.

"And the way I had it, [the Leader] gets increasingly physically frail as he gets smarter. In fact, what he's got is terminal, and he realizes that. The only way to save his own life is to detonate a much bigger bomb and harness the [full] release of gamma rays to save [himself]. He doesn't care who gets injured in the fallout."

SILVER SURFER: Like it did with its Fantastic Four license, Constantin, a German company, has hooked up with 20th Century Fox for a Silver Surfer film. Turman turned in his final draft a few months ago. Sources say "an exciting per-

son" may be attached to the movie soon, and it's unclear how Turman's story will be used.

Turman mentioned his draft was very faithful to the Silver Surfer/Galactus trilogy—without the Fantastic Four.

PRIME: "I'll probably get the first draft done in three months," Turman said about the Prime project, referred to as "Superman meets 'Big.' "

It will be produced by Gordon ("Die Hard," "The Rocketeer," "Field of Dreams") and executive-produced by the duo of Gary Gittlesohn, Malibu's senior executive vice president, and Scott Rosenberg, president of Malibu. The movie will incorporate Dr. Gross and several elements of the early Prime comics.

"Turman's got a great take on the character," enthused Rosenberg. "It's very significant that there's a writer attached, so this doesn't sit in development hell for three years while trying to get a script."

DRAGON SEASON ENDS

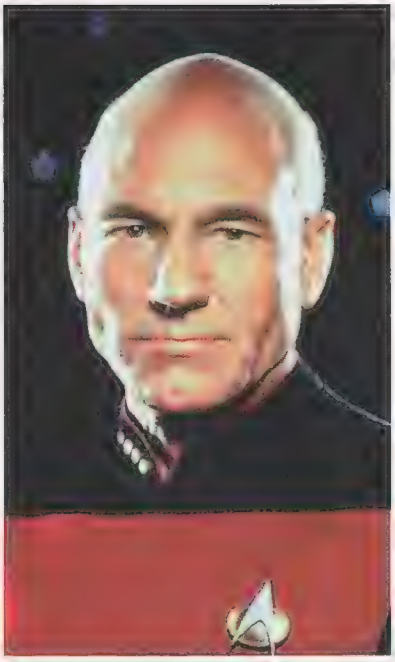
The Savage Dragon will likely conclude its first season of 13 episodes on the USA Network in February. The last four scheduled shows include: "Red-Handed," in which The Dragon finally jails Overlord, only to see his pal Barbaric bust the criminal free; "Loathing," which features The Fiend, a villain who feeds on hate and uses human bodies for hosts; "Rampage," in which The Dragon and She-Dragon take on a trio of female superfreak bikers; and "Armageddon," another She-Dragon guest vehicle in which Horde returns to try to destroy the ozone layer.

CHANGED THEIR MINDS!

George Clooney won't be part of the filming of "Green Hornet" during his spring hiatus from the hit TV show "ER" after all. Clooney was wooed by Steven Spielberg and his company DreamWorks to be in another movie, "The Peacemaker." Clooney's departure came around the same time it appeared that Sam Raimi would be the director for "Green Hornet." No word yet on the future of the film.

And Val Kilmer won't be The Saint. He's backed away from the spy movie, but still figures to be before the cameras next fall for "Batman and Robin," the fourth in the series.

As for Kilmer's co-stars, the latest Bat-gossip includes Alicia Silverstone ("Clueless") possibly playing Batgirl, who will apparently will be a romantic interest for Robin, and Sharon Stone being mentioned along with Julia Roberts and Demi Moore as Poison Ivy.



PATRICK STEWART AS PROF. X?

STEWART: MAKE IT DOUGH

Patrick Stewart will reportedly receive around $5 million to play Captain Jean-Luc Picard in Paramount Pictures' next "Star Trek" movie, the eighth in the series and the first to exclusively feature the cast from "Star Trek: The Next Generation." Production is expected to begin this spring for a Thanksgiving release. Brannon Braga and Ronald Moore, who wrote "Star Trek: Generations," are writing the new movie.

Stewart has also been rumored to be playing Mr. Freeze in the fourth Batman movie, and everybody seems to mention him when it comes to someone playing Professor Xavier in a live-action X-Men film.

BILSON, DEMEO RETURN

Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo, the team that brought The Flash and Human Target to television and wrote the big-screen movie "The Rocketeer," have a new series called "The Sentinel," which is scheduled to begin on UPN on March 13. The show is about a policeman with extrasensory powers.

Meanwhile, "Viper," their NBC series from last year, is being redeveloped by Paramount and Germany's Kirch Group as a syndicated series for next fall. Reports indicate Jeff Kaake ("Space Rangers") will take over the lead role. The supercar returns, though.

KABUKI TO GALAXY

David Mack recently told *Wizard* he was in final negotiations with Galaxy Entertainment for a live-action movie based on his popular Kabuki character, whose adventures are currently published by Caliber Press.

"There were some other studios interested, but they basically wanted to me to sell the movie rights and then do whatever they want. I call it strip-mining the character," Mack said. "These guys [Galaxy] really like the book and wanted me to have as much control as possible."

Mack is writing the screenplay, which will be based on the *Kabuki: Circle of Blood* comic series. He said Galaxy will seek out a director, and then hook up with a major studio.

BEAUTIFUL, DEADLY AND OPTIONED FOR A FILM: THAT'S KABUKI.

NOW, THAT'S RICH

The 1994 live-action "Richie Rich" film starring Macaulay Culkin—which grossed more than $80 million worldwide—just wasn't enough for Richie's masses of fans, so he'll be returning in a syndicated animated series next fall. The series will offer 13 episodes produced by Harvey Entertainment and Claster Television, and will also feature other Harvey characters.

'STRANGE' ENOUGH

"Strange Luck" has succeeded—at least temporarily—where "M.A.N.T.I.S." and "VR.5" failed. As the Friday night lead-in to "X-Files" on Fox, "Strange Luck" has been given the go-ahead for four additional episodes, pushing its season total to 17.

"Its lead-in has helped 'X-Files' to its best season ever, and the two-hour tandem has become the choice for television viewing on Friday nights among key demographics," said John A. Matoian, president of Fox Entertainment Group.

"Strange Luck" stars D.B. Sweeney as photojournalist Chance Harper, who, as a child, was the sole survivor of a plane crash, and now, as an adult, seems to be the right man in the wrong place all the time.

SHORT TAKES

A script by David S. Goyer for a live-action **Venom** movie for New Line Cinema should be completed by February. Early word is that Carnage will also be in the film....Sources tell *Wizard* that the **"Marvel Action Universe"** will likely not return in its current form. The future of that show and an as-yet-unsigned **Silver Surfer** animated series for Fox should be determined very soon....Production of a possible second **Generation X** movie or **Nick Fury** or **Black Widow** films for the Fox Network won't begin until after ratings are back on the first Gen X film. The broadcast date of "Generation X" has been pushed back from Jan. 16 to Feb. 20, when it will air as the Fox Tuesday Night Movie....Ben Edlund, creator and co-producer of **"The Tick"** animated series, recently won two Annie Awards, given by the International Animated Film Society. Edlund won for outstanding individual achievement for creative supervision and, with co-writer Richard Liebmann-Smith, for outstanding individual achievement for writing. **"The Simpsons"** won its fourth consecutive award in the television program category, and **"Pocahontas"** won in the theatrical feature category....**"Revenge of The Mask,"** the New Line sequel to the Jim Carrey smash of 1994, may not reach theaters until late 1997. Carrey has three other movies lined up, and Carrey's manager Jimmy Miller told *Entertainment Weekly* that Carrey's contract from "The Mask" had no option for a sequel. Meanwhile, it appears "The Mask" animated series will be broadcast daily in syndication beginning next fall....Gillian Anderson of **"The X-Files,"** who already has done a guest voice on "The Simpsons," did the voice of CGI Agent DataNully for an episode of ABC's **"Reboot"** that aired on Dec. 30....Average ratings on **"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman"** (currently flying through season #3) are up more than 10 percent from last season. Meanwhile, NBC has canceled the Supershow's once-competitor, **"seaQuest 2032,"** and production has been stopped 13 episodes into the third season. This season, the show changed its name from "seaQuest DSV," got a new captain and moved to Wednesday nights from Sundays, but was the victim of lackluster ratings....**"Space and Beyond,"** the Fox series, has received an order for 10 more episodes, pushing its season total to 22....**"Barb Wire,"** starring Pamela Lee as the fiesty Dark Horse heroine, is tentatively scheduled to open March 22....Warner Bros. will launch a syndicated television series next fall based on the three Mad Max movies. George Miller, director of the films, will be an executive producer....**"Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers"** won the voting for the fourth Fox Kids TV Takeover over the Thanksgiving holiday. "Goosebumps" finished second in the balloting of what Fox shows voters most wanted to see, followed by **"X-Men"** and **"Spider-Man."** "Power Rangers" won for the second consecutive year; "X-Men" won the first two years. Beginning Dec. 16, Fox flip-flopped the Saturday morning time periods for "X-Men" and "The Tick." X-Men now airs at 10:30 a.m. (ET), and the Tick at 11 a.m....Vincent D'Onofrio has signed to play a villain in **"Men in Black,"** a film from Columbia Pictures that is based on the Malibu Comics series. The movie, starring Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith and directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, is expected to begin production in March....Fox has ordered more episodes of **"MAD TV,"** which is giving NBC's "Saturday Night Live" a run for its money in the late Saturday night ratings race....Look for **"Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie"** in theaters this spring. The last episode of the television series for cable's Comedy Central has been filmed. **W**

Rob Allstetter really wants to play the Hulk.

CELEBRITY PROFILE

Seriously, who would make a better movie superheroine than Cory Everson? She's a six-time Ms. Olympia bodybuilding champion; host of "Gotta Sweat," an exercise show on ESPN2, and a series of exercise videos; and has had parts in "Natural Born Killers," "Double Impact" (with pal Jean-Claude Van Damme) and several television shows.

With a bod that'd entice a god, Everson reprises her role of Atalanta in an episode of "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys" that airs the week of Feb. 12. She's also frequently linked to—though not officially cast in—the She-Hulk movie Marvel hopes to have on CBS in 1996. Just back from three weeks in New Zealand shooting "Hercules," Everson took time out from a tour of gyms in Michigan to talk to *Wizard*.

We let Cory choose the subjects.

Acting: "I know fitness like the back of my hand, but don't know acting the same way. You can only be so good at so many things. I can't put all my effort into acting, because I have so many other things. It's very hard work. I don't pursue it. If I get a She-Hulk or Atalanta, it's because someone suggested me for it."

"Hercules": "In this one, I discover the Olympic Games and I have a love scene with Hercules, which was kinda weird. [Atalanta] is a fun character; she gets to lift Hercules over her head. If she were real, I would want to be her friend."

She-Hulk: "I was first contacted by Oliver Stone about it for NBC. They went through some script changes, and now it's at CBS. I didn't think I was going to be involved, and then I got a call a couple of months ago saying that it's going to be done, so who knows in this business? I've known the Marvel Comics people and Stan Lee for years."

The possibility of wearing green makeup: "Lou Ferrigno [the actor who played television's Incredible Hulk] told me it was hell. It would take him twice as long to get the makeup on and off as it would to work on the scenes. I know it's not healthy for the skin."

Appearing as a henchwoman on "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" last year: "Oh, I love Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher and everyone on that show. I wore all black; it was like dressing up for Halloween. Lois Lane beats me up, but that's because she outsmarts me."

Power mouse: "My idol was Mighty Mouse. I used to watch the TV and not blink—as a kid, you're afraid if you blink, you'll miss something. I remember kissing the TV. I had an obsession with Mighty Mouse. I wanted to marry him."

Comic books: "They're appealing to kids, but they're also appealing to young adults and older adults. Who doesn't love Superman or Spider-Man? They're an enjoyable way to get good morals and ethics across without hitting kids over the head. I also really enjoyed the Bionic Woman."

Art: "It's my first love. I studied commercial interior design at the University of Wisconsin and still love to paint."

The plug: "Can you tell everybody about my newsletter? They can call 1-800-815-CORY."

TOGETHER, THEY'RE THE BADDEST FORCE FOR GOOD.

JIM LEE'S

TMNT

TALK ABOUT A POWER MEETING. WHEN THESE GUYS TEAMED UP, THE PAYOFF WAS THE MOST MUSCULAR CRIME-FIGHTING UNION EVER. TOO BAD FOR MARAUDING MUTANT PUNKS, GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTS GONE WRONG AND OTHER LIFE-SUCKING LOSERS. BECAUSE ERIK LARSEN'S THE SAVAGE DRAGON® AND JIM LEE'S SUPER BUFF TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES® ARE TRULY THE STRONG ARM OF THE LAW. AND NOW THEY'RE AVAILABLE AS INDIVIDUALLY NUMBERED ACTION FIGURES THAT ARE FULLY ARTICULATED, HIGHLY-DETAILED, AND ARMED TO THE TEETH WITH HI-TECH WEAPONRY. SO GRAB SOME OF THE ACTION. BUT BE PREPARED. THESE COLDBLOODED CRUSADERS ARE A REAL HANDFUL.

ERIK LARSEN'S

THE SAVAGE DRAGON

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Playmates

NEW STAR WARS EXCLUSIVE

HERE'S A COMPANY-BY-COMPANY BREAKDOWN ON WHAT EVERY COMIC-RELATED TOY AFICIONADO SHOULD KNOW.

KENNER

An exclusive offer for a Star Wars action figure of Han Solo in a Stormtrooper outfit is currently available on specially marked boxes of Kellogg's Froot Loops cereal. The Solo figure is available from Kellogg's in exchange for two Froot Loops proof-of-purchase UPC symbols and the official order form. The offer expired on December 31, 1995 (or when supplies were exhausted). The figure is limited to one per order form and five per mailing household. The secondary market value for the Han Solo Stormtrooper is $20-$30.

Kenner has also released a four-pack of original Star Wars figures, crafted from the old figure molds. The re-issues are identical to the originals and include Chewbacca, Darth Vader, Han Solo and Luke Skywalker. The set of four retails for $19.95.

Some hobby retailers expressed concern that the new Star Wars line might have a negative effect on the sales of figures and accessories produced from 1978 through 1985. "Such has not been the case," claims retailer Ken Lawrence of Heroes Unlimited in Oradell, N.J. "The new line hasn't slowed sales on older pieces at all. I wouldn't say the new line has sparked significant interest in older releases, but it hasn't hurt."

Of the new Star Wars line, Princess Leia and C-3PO have taken the lead as the most actively pursued figures. C-3PO was a late release and is now valued at $12-$18. There was a rumor in the hobby marketplace that Kenner was displeased with Leia's appearance and planned for changes. Not so, say Kenner sources. Her figure is currently an easy $15-$20 sell.

According to retailers in the know, three different Star Wars case assortments have been produced. Assortment #1 contained no Leias or C-3POs, three Han Solos, three Luke Skywalkers and two each of the remaining figures (Ben Obi-Wan Kenobi, Chewbacca and R2-D2). Assortment #2 included no C-3POs, two Leias and two each of all the other figures. The most recent assortment features one Leia, one Kenobi, two C-3POs and two of everyone else.

Star Wars releases slated for February include Han Solo (Hoth gear), Lando Calrissian (Cloud City outfit), Yoda and TIE Fighter Pilot, along with Luke Skywalker's Lightsaber and a Speeder Bike with Scout Trooper.

On the Legends of Batman front, six new figures are due out in February as an exclusive to Warner Bros. stores. Dark Warrior, Longbow, Samurai and Viking Batmans, plus Crusader Robin and Riddler, will be metallic re-paints in special packaging.

TOY BIZ

Retailers breaking down cases of Fantastic Four and Iron Man have indicated that Attuma and Titanium Man are being included at a rate of two per case. Look for these figures to increase in value to the $12-$15 range.

Toy Biz recently released two new 12-inch dolls in the Spider-Man Animated line. Look for Spider-Man and Wolverine on the shelves of wherever action figures are sold. Spidey and Wolvie each have a suggested retail of $24.99. Speaking of 12-inchers, the Mary Jane Watson doll continues to hold its own. Good luck finding an MJ, and if you do, expect to pay anywhere from $40 to $50.

Len Katz of The Joker's Child store in Fairlawn, N.J. contends, "Toy Biz keeps churning out figures at a rapid pace. It seems that before a real collector demand can begin for one line, a new one is on the way. However, the most recent X-Men assortment has sold very well, especially Spiral." With those thoughts in mind, let's note that in the X-Men line, Toy Biz has released a 10-inch Archangel figure with flappable wings. Meanwhile, contrary to hobby talk, Controller #13 and La Lunática are not part of the first assortment of the X-Men 2099 line. Both figures will likely be in a second assortment due out this spring.

McFARLANE TOYS

Is Spawn the hottest action figure line in the marketplace? It is, according to Jay Demircift of Puzzle Zoo in Santa Monica, Calif. "I had a tremendous pre-sell on the latest Spawn assortment," reports Demircift. "The detail on these figures is incredible." The Vertebreaker and Violator II figures, packaged at a one-per-case rate, are the two hottest figures in the Spawn line. The asking price is $25-$30 for Vertebreaker and $20-$25 for Violator II.

A new version of Spawn has been issued by McFarlane Toys as a Kay-Bee exclusive.

BY **DAN ALBAUGH**

Froot Loops rocks the Star Wars market.

The figure is a re-paint of the original Spawn figure, colored all gold with green eyes. Packaged with a Spawn comic book, the for-sale price in the secondary market is already $18-$25.

McFarlane has also done an exclusive with Target stores. A twin-pack featuring a bendable Violator and a Commando Spawn is now available. Expect the price of this item to fall within the $25-$35 range in the secondary market.

Several readers have asked for explanations regarding the Overtkill variants. A teal-colored Overtkill was initially produced with a five-cent parking meter accessory. (Overtkill uses the parking meter as a club.) The hand-painted "five-cent" was considered sloppy-looking by the McFarlane brass, and production was stopped. It was then replaced with a parking meter with the stamped words five- and 10-cent. The first version, with the five-cent meter, accounts for approximately three to four percent of the entire run. The third (and most common) Overtkill variant is a gray and green re-paint.

Here's the scoop on the navy blue Spawn: It was made exclusively for those hobby retailers ordering cases of Spawn trading cards from WildStorm Productions. It's currently selling for $90-$100 in the secondary market.

PLAYMATES

Playmates has released four figures from the WildC.A.T.s line in new Image Universe packaging as a Wal-Mart exclusive. Included in the line will be Black Razor, Slag, Mr. Majestic and Pike with stealth suit. Suggested retail will be $6-$8 each.

Black Razor's weapons include a laser pistol, rifle laser blaster, knife and sheath. In addition to the ECM stealth suit, Pike is armed with a hyperblaster and a breakaway battle staff. Mr. Majestic comes equipped with a bioblast arm, crystal saber and a laser wrist crossbow. Slag's primitive weapons include a lava battle club and chucking chunk.

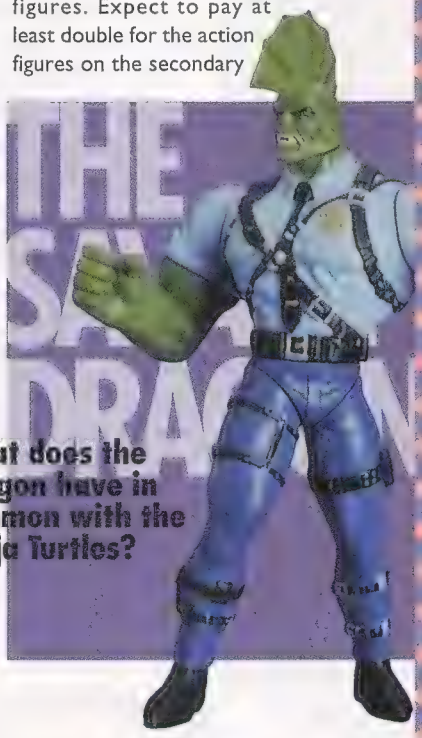
Retailers report that figures from Playmates' new Savage Dragon and Jim Lee Ninja Turtles figures are being packaged in the same case. Four figures—Savage Dragon, Battle Damaged Dragon, She-Dragon and Barbaric—make up the Savage Dragon line. The Ninja Turtles include Raphael, Michaelangelo and Donatello. There's currently no Leonardo figure scheduled, because Playmates didn't have the time to produce one and keep the line to its schedule, but we'll let you know if one will be showing up soon. The figures are retailing for $6-$8 per figure.

BANDAI

Can't find Man-Eating Cow and Die Fledermaus figures from The Tick line? That's because the two figures were shortprinted and inserted at a rate of one per case of 12 figures. Those that make the store shelves are readily snapped up. Anticipate paying up to $50 each for Cow and Fledermaus on the secondary market.

THINKWAY TOYS

Thinkway Toys of New York City has produced a line of six-inch action figures based on the hit computer-animated movie "Toy Story." Included are Buzz Lightyear (flying), Buzz Lightyear (karate), Hamm, Rex, Woody (kicking) and Woody (quick draw). Suggested retail is $6.99 for each of the action figures. Expect to pay at least double for the action figures on the secondary market, due to not enough product to satisfy the high demand.



What does the Dragon have in common with the Ninja Turtles?

Also produced were talking figures of Buzz Lightyear (12 inches) and Woody (16 inches), which each have a suggested retail of $34.99. A Buzz Lightyear Electronic Talking Bank is also available for $34.99.

Are the "Toy Story" figures hot? Bill Brady of Brady's Marvel Universe in Mesa, Ariz. offers this endorsement: "The 'Toy Story' figures are flying off of the shelves." Thinkway spent the month of December working overtime to meet the heavy Christmas rush. Word has it that Thinkway will produce more figures of different characters for mid-1996, in time for the video release of "Toy Story."

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

(AND SOON)

1.) **Havok (X-Men)**—In his original (read: non-crappy suit), this ex-X Man would make a striking, kick-ass figure. Throw in a cool action feature like light-up energy rings on his chest and you'd have a figure that'd definitely sell better than, say, Mojo or Slayback.

2.) **Captain America (Marvel Heroes)**—With shield-slingin' action by twisting his spring-back waist.

3.) **Sandman (Spider-Man)**—With giant Hamm-like detachable hands (mallet and grasping hand-shape), as well as detachable torso with interchangeable "sand-pile" body.

4.) **Grand Moff Tarkin (Star Wars)**—With imperial Torture Droid.

5.) **Aquaman (DC Heroes)**—With recoiling harpoon hand.

6.) **Lobo (DC Heroes)**—With giant hooked chain, red light-up eyes and "fart-when-you-squeeze-'im" rubber bulldog.

7.) **Electro (Spider-Man)**—Eyes and hands light up (like Toy Biz's Mandroids).

8.) **Hulk (Marvel Heroes)**—He's just really freakin' big.

9.) **Captain Pike (Classic Star Trek)**—With light-up "Bonnon" ("Tap") and "Boop-oop" ("Nope") sound effects. Realistic frozen expression on his face too.

10.) **Crimson Dynamo (Iron Man)**—All shiny like Toy Biz's Iron Man, some of Armor attachments. And maybe he shoots missiles.

Have some add-on comments to the list? Tell us what figures you would see made (along with some of the reasons why they qualify) by posting your comments in the "Wizard World" section here on America Online. Use Keyword: Wizard and look under "Toy Wish List"! Or just e-mail us at Wizard1638@aol.com.

A FINAL WORD

Hey manufacturers, feel free to let us know about new releases. Send info, photos, product samples, etc. to: Toy Chest, Attn: Dan Albaugh, P.O. Box 458, Waterford, PA 16441.

Toy collectors are also welcome to provide input for this column. If you've got any interesting tidbits (new variants, show reports, etc.) that will make this column more informative, send them to the preceding address or fax them to (814) 796-3936. Thanks! W

Dan Albaugh dances with the devil.

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything that we couldn't stretch into a full-page newsy thing

SATURDAY MORNING'S ROCK!

Remember those good ol' days when you'd wake up reeeal early on Saturday, run downstairs in your jammies, turn on the tube and just watch hours upon hours of cartoons? You don't? Well, you should. But the best part of those memorable shows were their theme songs. And now, courtesy of producer Ralph Sall and Bulletproof Recording Company, you can relive those fantastic days of old with the awesome CD *Saturday Morning: Cartoons' Greatest Hits*.

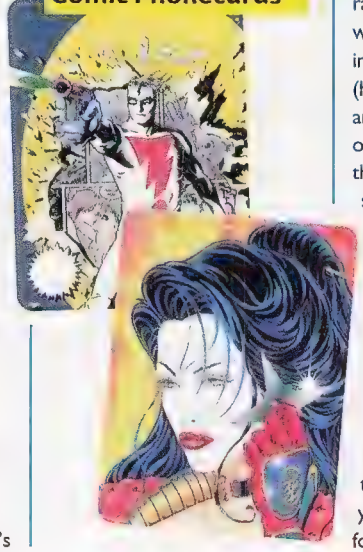
Spend some time with Scooby Doo ("Zoinks!"), Underdog ("Look! Up in the sky! It's a frog. A frog?"), the Bugaloos ("They're in the air and everywhere, flying high, flying loose..."), Hong Kong Phooey ("Number One Super Guy"), H.R. Pufnstuf, Fat Albert and tons more. Don't worry, there's even a version of the ever-popular Spider-Man theme song. (No, we're not gonna get into *that* one again...). But this product's standout feature is that all of these songs are performed by several of today's hottest alternative musicians, like Liz Phair, Material Issue, Sponge, Matthew Sweet, Tripping Daisy and even the Ramones. So run over to your local music shop, grab a copy of this super album and then pour yerself a bowl o' cereal as you listen to some really catchy tunes.

PHONE HOME

Dynamic Forces will be releasing five new phonecards this February, featuring a wide array of talent. The Madman Phonecard spotlights Mike Allred's snappy hero right off the cover of his first Dark Horse issue. Then there's the *Black & White* Phonecard, which stars Art and Pamela Thibert's characters from the cover of the first issue of their new Image series. The Elfquest Phonecard presents Steve Blevins and Kathryn Bolinger's work from *Elfquest: Wavedancers* #1. Kabuki gets her second phonecard, this time displaying the cover art from *Kabuki: Circle of Blood* #3. And finally, there's a Hellshock/Shi Promo Phonecard featuring the combined talents of Jae Lee and Bill Tucci. All these funky collectible cards are also quite practical, as all of them (except for the Promo card) come with 15 minutes of phone time.

And in case you didn't know it, Dynamic Forces has already released an Ash Phonecard (featuring the cover to *Ash* #3), as well as a Shi card (with striking cover art from *Shi* #4). Dynamic's phone cards will cost you a mere $10 apiece and, unlike most phonecards, they have no expiration date.

Comic Phonecards



THEY'RE TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR RADIO!

Hey, the two sickest animals in the world are back, and they're on the radio! We're talkin' about Ren and Stimpy, Nickelodeon's fine furry friends. Their newest CD, *Radio Daze*, features 12 original songs and the vocal talents of Billy West and company. Here's the skinny: After winning a contest, Stimpy (he's the stinky cat) gets to be the DJ of K-DAZE, which just happens to be a mobile radio station with a mere 10 watts of power to its name. So, in an effort to be heard, Ren (he's the funny-lookin' puppy) and Stimpy head cross-country on a quest for Hollywood, as they play song after song after song (Actually, there's only six albums in the K-DAZE library...) for their listening public. *Radio Daze* is currently available in stores on CD ($15.98) and cassette ($9.98). You can also read about the duo's DJ fiasco in the accompanying Marvel comic that tells the hilarious tale of the album. Check your local comic shop for availability.

BANG YOUR HEAD WITH MARC SILVESTRI

Well, you wouldn't *really* want to bang your head with him, or you'd get hurt real bad. Hey, the guy's got like a 16-inch steel plate in his forehead! Anyway, check out Braindance's new album *Fear Itself*, which has a pretty rockin', gothic-type feel to it. But what alla you Image freaks'll love is that some of the interior art is none other than Marc Silvestri's own work from *Cyberforce* and *Witchblade*. Plus,

comic artist Marc Latrique has contributed a really funky-lookin' cover! To order *Fear Itself*, send a check or money order for $15 to Sebastian Elliott at Double Edge Productions, 215 Thompson Street, Suite 11, New York City, NY 10012.

A STATUE TO CROW ABOUT

Following on the heels of Inteleg's successful Crow vinyl model kit, the company is releasing a cold-cast porcelain statue of the character made famous by the late actor Brandon Lee. The statue, limited to 5,700 pieces and complete with a certificate of authenticity, features not only a true-to-life-looking Brandon Lee, but a crow in flight, held up by a support wire. Pretty cool! This awesome-looking statue, sculpted by William Merklein, is hand-painted and stands over nine inches tall. It ships in February and is yours for a mere $145. (Better start savin' those pennies!) And if you've got even more cash to blow, check out the cold-cast bronze statue, which is currently available. With only 300 produced, this megacollectible will run you about $395.

BE A MODEL CITIZEN

"Holy airplane glue, Batman! Them's some nifty models!" Yes, indeedy, Horizon has released a number of neat-looking models based on that popular flying rodent guy (i.e., Batman). There's the…heh heh…Batmobile of 1950 (Bwah-hah-hah-hah! Sorry, it's so funny-looking, it's great!), which'll run you $89.95, but it's definitely worth it! Nostalgia rocks! This beauty of a car features a detailed interior and movable wheels! Plus, you can also get yer grubby paws on Batman, Catwoman, Robin, the Riddler and Bane models, all for $89.95 apiece. Then all you giant robot fans can rejoice, as the Gigantor model is now available. Retailing for $79.95, this kit features ball joints that allow you to put ol' Gigantor in a number of funky poses. And finally, Horizon launches its Original Sculptor Series with a doozy: an original creature called Wind Slasher. Created by Steve Wang, this sick-lookin', highly detailed model can be had for $195. So get busy!

Gigantor Model Kit

1950's Batmobile Model Kit

JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

ULTRA 64: The Skinny

Nintendo Ultra 64

The video gaming community has been aware of Nintendo's Ultra 64 for over two years now. Numerous rumors and false starts have left gamers skeptical and Nintendo *way* behind in the standings of this next generation video game race. But finally, Nintendo unveiled its Ultra 64 at the annual Video Game Exhibition in Makuhari, Japan.

"After 19 months of intense development, we have obtained our two main goals for the Ultra 64: to develop a chipset capable of delivering the world's best video game experience, and to do it at a price that can deliver a hardware set below $250 retail," said Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo.

This delay, however, could wind up being a big mistake, as it gave Sony and Sega over a year to get established. I think the majority of 16-bit owners have already made the decision to dump their old systems and go with Sega Saturn or Sony PlayStation. I get asked a lot of questions, but the most common has to be, "What system should I buy?" Well, consider this: When Ultra 64 debuts at $250 in April, expect the Saturn and PlayStation to drop to $200 or less. My advice is to sell your old stuff now (if you want to, that is), before they become totally worthless, and wait until April '96 to make your system decision.

At the Ultra 64's heart is the industries only true 64-bit processor coupled with a single custom graphics chip which will manage all visual and audio functions. The central processor will communicate with memory at an unprecedented 500MHz, meaning an enormous increase in graphic realism.

"The story of our industry is the never ending search for bigger and better game play and game graphics," said Peter Main, Nintendo's vice president of marketing. "Once a masterpiece is created, like last year's *Donkey Kong Country*, the bar is raised for all game developers. We think Nintendo will move that bar even higher by the end of this year. And by the end of April of next year, game players will see what true 64-bit processing really means—with a number of games from the world's top software developers that will set the bar even higher than most people thought possible, with games that will only be available for Nintendo Ultra 64."

Speaking of games, software is what sells systems, and ultimately the Ultra 64's games will determine its fate. At the Japan show, Nintendo debuted an extensive and impressive roster of games. Keep in mind that the names are temporary and most titles are in early stages of development. The following game-by-game description was made possible through a report filed on Nintendo's World-WideWeb site.

Super Mario 64

Super Mario 64

This one looks incredible and features that familiar plumber who's become Nintendo's spokesman over the years. Anyway, this 3-D interactive game begins at the exterior of a castle (of course). Inside, Mario pops through doors and picture warps to get to all sorts of different stages. The coolest thing about this one, though (besides the awesome, realistic look and feel to it), is that Mario does something he's never really done before: He gets to make decisions as to which way he wants to go, as opposed to the typical side-scrolling ones. Should be a huge hit.

Pilot Wings

Pilotwings

Pilotwings soars with realistic graphics and finger-clenching maneuvers. As in the SNES game, the

new *Pilotwings* features several types of flight: hang glider, helicopter and a jet pack. One difference from the earlier 16-bit version is the new seamless environment that encapsulates the USA. You can fly across the country (which has been compacted considerably) and encounter famous landmarks. Courses no longer require flying through hoops; it's more a matter of time and survival. For instance, you might find yourself hang gliding down through a canyon of waterfalls. *Pilotwings* will probably end up as one of the best showcases for the Ultra 64.

Kirby Bowl

The only game besides *Super Mario 64* that was playable at the show, *Kirby Bowl* looks a bit like *Kirby's Dream Course*, but the play is much more varied. Instead of basing the game on elements of golf, *Kirby Bowl* plays with the idea of Kirby as a ball that you guide. One game mode lets you snowboard with Kirby down a wacky slope where you try to grab stars and jump over other obstacles. In a four-player mode, everyone controls a round Kirby and attempts to knock each other out of the bowl-like arena. The 3-D characteristics of the Ultra 64 controller help create an exciting effect. Kirby's speed and momentum can carry him off the edge of a course, so you must adjust constantly using the stick.

Legend of Zelda 64

Only two brief demo animations were shown of this title. There's a polygon-based Link battling a Knight in shining armor. The reflective armor of the knight shimmered with light as the character moved to strike Link, but the hero of Hyrule executed a most elegant kick and stab.

Mario Kart 64

This game should be ready in June, shortly after the system launch on April 21st. It will have a multiplayer Ghost Mode and possibly a battle mode.

Wave Race 64

Wave Race 64

Talk about a surprise. What's a minor Game Boy title doing as a game on the video game system of the future? Well, it's looking incredible, like *F-Zero* with waves. So far, demo stages include races in urban canals and rivers. The water bikes have given way to futuristic speed boats. Expect fast, multiplayer action and precision 3-D stick control.

Blastdozer

This wild ride from Rare puts you in command of one of several types of high-powered bulldozers. You're job is to race through cities and towns, clearing a path in order to avoid catastrophe. This one's full of the most incredible destruction you can imagine.

Shadows of the Empire

Buggy Battle

Angel studios has created a cool, futuristic arena battle that produced lots of good comments at the show.

Star Fox

Realistic looking space action, except for the hairy looking guy in the cockpit.

Goldeneye

Doom-like with incredible sound. The video segments being shown around don't do this one justice. As a rare title, expect this one to be a knockout.

Creator

Imagine making your own dinosaur, putting it in a world of other creatures, animating it, controlling it so your li'l dino eats the others, and you've got *Creator*. Plus, it's accompanied by your very own soundtrack.

Shadows of the Empire

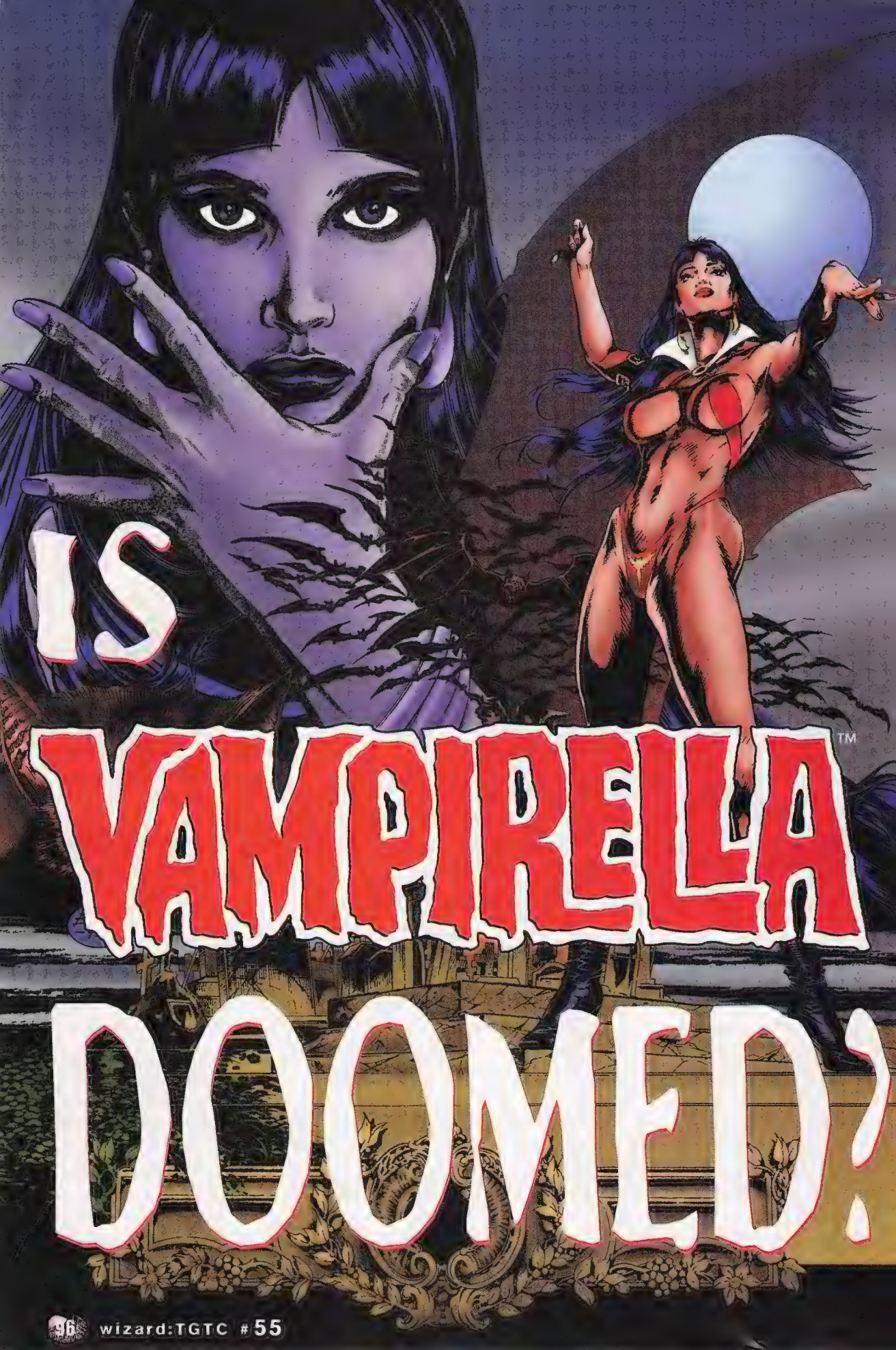
Cool graphics of snow speeders and walkers. The finished game will include first-person action in the *Dark Forces* mold.

Body Harvest

In *Body Harvest*, you control a series of vehicles that are used to combat an alien invasion by moving from one hotspot to another. If you take out the target, you'll get a new vehicle. In all, there are said to be 80 vehicles ranging from tanks to planes.

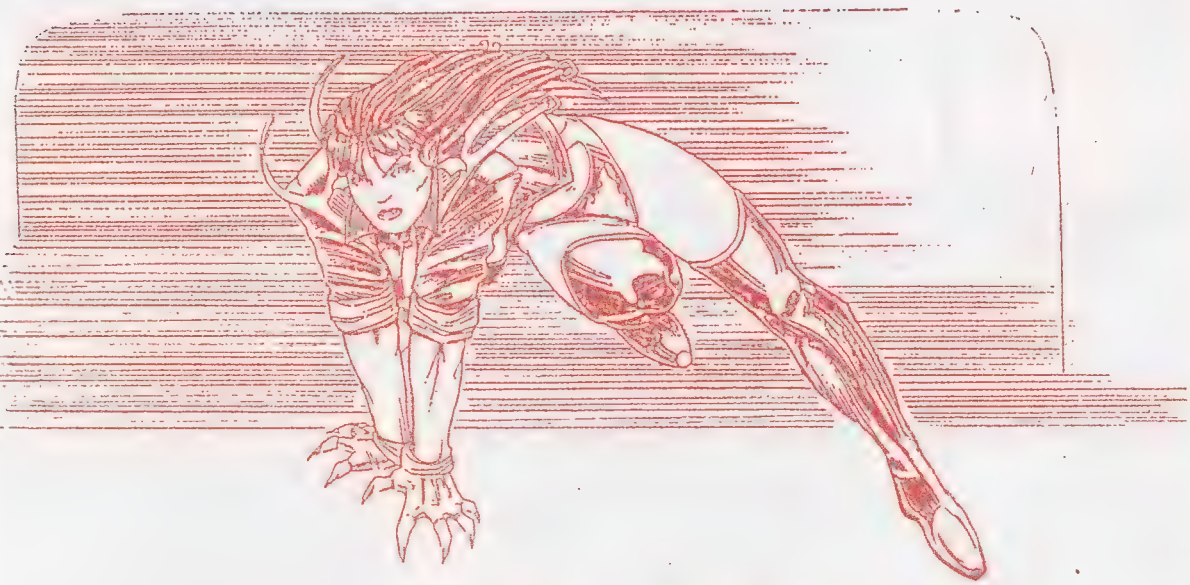
We here at *Wizard* predict that when the Ultra 64 debuts for $250 on April 21st, it might be initially disappointing, due to the lack of software. However, in the long run, with Nintendo's superior technology and incredible programmer base, the Ultra 64 looks like it'll ultimately be the best system out there.

W


IS
VAMPIRELLA™
DOOMED?

Heck if we know. But you will, if and only if you check out *Vengeance of Vampirella* №1/2, a brand-spankin' new Vampi tale available *exclusively* through this one-time-only *Wizard* offer. Drop a mere three bucks and you get:

- A brand-new, all-original Vampirella story by regular *Vengeance of Vampirella* writer Tom Sniegoski and classic Vampi artist Rudy Nebres!
- Behind-the-scenes sketchbook material featuring Tom's original script and Rudy's unfinished pencils!
- Two staples! Lots of red ink!



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YOU COULD WIN:

An Original Rob Zombie Work Of Art!

A White Zombie Autographed Guitar!

White Zombie Autographed CDs!

HOW TO PLAY

Just complete the entry form and mail it in! Do it 2000 times if you want for 2000 ways to win! (Just be sure to write each one, no photocopied submissions, and mail each one separately.)

LIST OF PRIZES!

Grand Prize:

One grand prize winner will receive a CD copy of White Zombie's two cataclysmic hit discs, La Sexorcisto: Devil Music Vol. 1 and Astro-Creep: 2000 songs of love, destruction and other synthetic delusions of the Electric Head, each personally signed by every member of the band! But wait, there's more! We'll also throw in a guitar autographed by the entire band *and* an original work of art from a White Zombie CD liner created by the master Rob Zombie himself.

Runners-Up:

Ten runners-up will receive a CD copy of White Zombie's current release Astro-Creep: 2000 songs of love, destruction and other synthetic delusions of the Electric Head autographed by the entire band.

More Legal Than Legal

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Geffen Records, MCA Records and their immediate families or anyone behind the facade of this innocent-looking bookstore. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: White Zombie Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to yank it out of your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 1, 1996. Prize winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility, liability release and/or publicity release, which must be returned within 14 days of notification or an alternate winner may be selected. Each prize winner expressly consents to the use of his or her name and likeness without compensation to advertise outcome of contest.

GEFFEN

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Mail your completed entry to:

White Zombie Contest
c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 1ST, 1996!

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

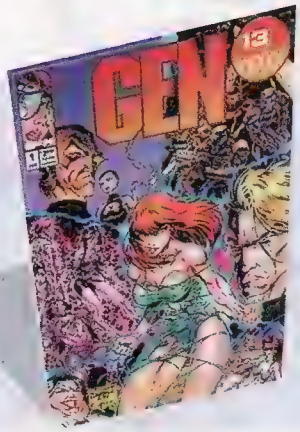
More bass or more treble? _____

GEFFEN

WHITE ZOMBIE

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are January's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. GEN13 #1 (mini-series)

Writers: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
Artists: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

The *Gen13* mini-series #1 is, as silly as it sounds, the Stealth Bomber of comics. It's been on the Top 10 before. Heck, it's been here in slot No. 1 before. Then it disappears for a few issues. It flies beneath your radar. It's not on the chart. Suddenly—POW! It's here again! It comes out of nowhere like a Stealth Bomber and blows Saddam Hussein right out of his friggin' bunker! IT BOMBS YOU BACK INTO THE STONE AGE JUST LIKE HARRY TRUMAN WOULD HAVE DONE IF HE WAS STILL PRESIDENT! Whew. It's back on the list, outta nowhere, back in the top slot! It's bold! It's exciting! Hey! Who spiked our coffee?

2. LADY DEATH #1

Writer: Brian Pulido
Artist: Steven Hughes

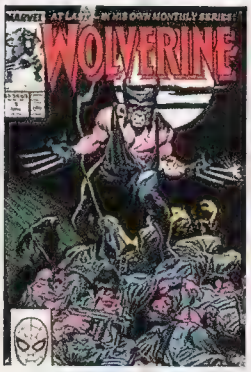
This month marks the twentieth time *Lady Death* #1 has appeared in our Top 10. To commemorate the occasion, we thought we'd get creator/writer Brian Pulido's thoughts on this unprecedented occasion. Brian? "Huh? Us? Whew! Who would have imagined this? Well, I guess you guys did. Because of your support and comic shop owners' support, we live the dream—telling stories, making comics. From the bottomless pits of our dark hearts, the whole Chaos! crew thanks you. Because, as goofy as it sounds, it's undeniably true. Without you, we ain't nuthin. Thanks for letting us tell you stories."
Aw, shucks. Somebody pass the Kleenex, huh?

3. THE X-FILES #1

Writer: Stefan Petrucha
Artist: Charles Adlard

Okay, it's like this: You take the most popular geekoid show in America that keeps pubescent freaks at home on a Friday night and do a comic adaptation. Comics also keep geeks at home on Friday nights, y'see. Natural crossover. Then you put some top-flight creators on the book like Petrucha and Adlard and you've got a hit. It's that simple, right? Right? Well, maybe not. There's got to be something more to it than that, or we would've had a hit already with our *Kung-Fu: The Legend Continues* comic.

NUMBER THREE

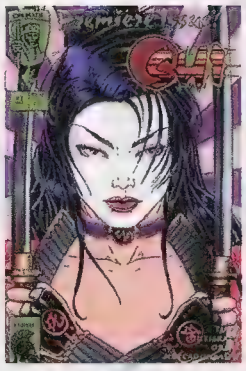


NUMBER FOUR

4. WOLVERINE #1 (SERIES)

Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: John Buscema and Al Williamson

It's about time we got some quality comic art 'round these parts. Nobody—We repeat, NOBODY!—draws comics as well as Big John Buscema. Now let's look and see what kind of artists we've had in past "Top 10s." Lessee, there's Scott McDaniel, Dan Panosian, something named "Buzz" and Scott Kolins (Scott Kolins?). It's about time people came around to this, the first issue in Wolvie's ever-popular ongoing series. Next month, we get a Gil Kane book or we hold our breath till we turn blue. And speaking of blue, doesn't Wolvie's hair look a bit blue here?



5. SHI #1

Writers: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez
Artists: William Tucci and Barry Orkin

In this ish, Barry Orkin, heir to the fabulous pest-control fortune, goes head to head with Shi, master assassin of the Sohei monks!

Okay, maybe not. Actually, this issue is an introduction to Ana Ishikawa, the pasty-faced femme fatale we've all come to know and love as Shi. Caveat: Ana is buck-nekkid for the first three pages, so you'd better be 18 or have a note from your mom to read this one. And you'd better *read* it too!

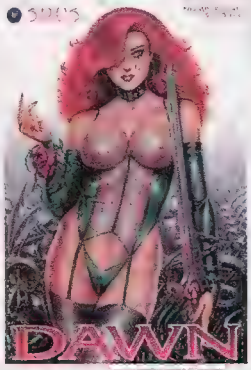
NUMBER FIVE

6. DAWN #1 (SERIES)

Writer: Joseph Michael Linsner
Artist: Joseph Michael Linsner

Y'know, we've always had a thing for green-eyed redheads. Reminds us of that crazy weekend in Vegas we had with a 55-gallon drum of baby oil, three bags of corn chips and Gareb Shamus' Visa card.

But seriously, folks—after a few months bubbling under in the #11-#20 range, *Dawn* #1 finally breaks through. Beautifully and lavishly illustrated by Joseph Michael Linsner, buzz has been building big-time on this series and its intriguing character.



NUMBER SIX

7. ANGELA #1 (SERIES)

Writer: Neil Gaiman
Artist: Greg Capullo

What's this? A Neil Gaiman comic in the "Top 10 Comics," and it's not an issue of *Sandman*? Just goes to show you that this topsy-turvy marketplace sure can get wacky sometimes.

But the reason this sucker shows up here is the popularity of Angela, that heaven-sent Spawn-hunter. And she's bound to get even more exposure. Our buddies at Todd McFarlane Productions have big things planned for Angie. Just you watch.

NUMBER SEVEN

NUMBER EIGHT

8. WOLVERINE #75

Writer: Larry Hama
Artist: Adam Kubert

What's this? A Larry Hama comic in the "Top 10 Comics" and it's not an issue of *G.I. Joe*? Just goes to show you that this topsy-turvy marketplace sure does make a lot of sense sometimes.

This is, of course, the famous "Wolvie-gets-his-adamantium-sucked-right-out-his-pores-by-Magneto" issue, which—even though none of us have adamantium bonded to our skeletons—must hurt like hell.

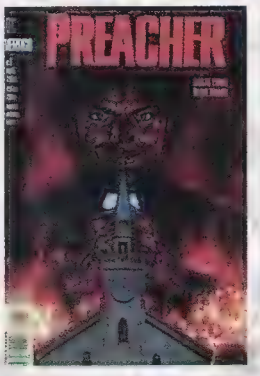
9. THE X-FILES #2

Writer: Stefan Petrucha
Artist: Charles Adlard

Cheese, Louise! Seems like every freakin' month *X-Files* #1 and *X-Files* #2 appear in the Top 10. These two books have become quite the pair. They're inextricably linked, just like peanut butter and jelly, only you don't smear them on bread and cut the crusts off. Just like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, only comics don't dance. Just like warm water and an enema bag, only...ah, you get the picture.

NUMBER NINE

10. PREACHER #1



Writer: Garth Ennis
Artist: Steve Dillon

Ooooh! Vertigo! In the Top 10? What transpires here?

What transpires is one of the coolest, most shocking comics out today. God is not in his Heaven and all is not right in the world. So preacher Jesse Custer is out to find God and give him a good talking-to. Custer is aided and abetted by former girlfriend Tulip and Cassidy, the drunk vampire. Sound like fun? Sure is. But it's definitely not for the faint of heart.

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. **SPAWN** #9 IMAGE
12. **X-FILES** #3 TOPPS
13. **X-MEN ALPHA** MARVEL
14. **VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA** #1 HARRIS
15. **GENERATION X** #1 MARVEL
16. **ASH** #1 EVENT
17. **THE MAXX** #1 IMAGE
18. **SPAWN** #1 IMAGE
19. **LADY DEATH: B.H.A.H.** #1 CHAOS!
20. **LADY RAWHIDE** #1 TOPPS

WIZARD®

CHROME CARDS!
EXCLUSIVE!
-ANGELA™-
1st card in the set.
Lady Rawhide™
1/2
EXCLUSIVE!

COMIC WATCH

BACK ISSUES TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON

StormWatch #8

WRITERS: **JIM LEE, BRANDON CHOI & H.K. PROGER**
ARTISTS: **SCOTT CLARK, JIM LEE & TREVOR SCOTT**
PUBLISHER: **IMAGE COMICS/WILDSTORM**
RELEASE DATE: **MARCH 1994**

Ripclaw's on the hunt as this issue kicks off...little did he or his fans know that his quarry—Sarah Rainmaker of *Gen*[13], who debuts here—would soon become hotter than him! When United Nations reps ask for the return of this "high-level seedling" (a latent superhuman) to her Apache village, Rippie and his StormWatch pals are on the case. Of course, it ain't that easy, as hovercraft-riding U.S. government baddies become a powerful obstacle to the team's mission—until this little "seedling" shows she has more than an attitude, and knocks the nasty attackers for a loop with her various elemental powers. After impressing the heck out of Ripclaw by shorting out an opponent's circuits with rain water, she almost becomes a SWer (She'd've been a perfect addition: storm powers, *Storm*Watch—get it?), but is quickly swept up by International Operations' bitchy Ivana. The rest is well-read history: Sarah soon became the fifth Gen[13] member, joining one of the hugest superteams of the '90s. Rainmaker fit in real well and turned just about as popular as her teammates—like Freefall and Grunge—but after she revealed herself to be a lesbian, she became the controversial talk of the title! And it all started right here. W

GOOD&CHEAP

by Brian Cunningham

GOOD-READIN' BACK ISSUES YOU CAN BUY FOR PEANUTS!

The Avengers #217

WRITER: **JIM SHOOTER**
ARTISTS: **BOB HALL & DAN GREEN**
CURRENT VALUE: **$3**

Things weren't going well for Hank Pym.

Leading up to this issue, Pym (a.k.a. Yellowjacket) was slowly unraveling. Feeling very insecure, he created a robot that would trash the Avengers. A robot that only *he* could dismantle in order to prove his worth to the team. His plan failed, he was expelled from the team and the Wasp divorced him.

Avengers #217 picks up with a man disgraced trying to gather up the pieces of his shattered life. Enter Egghead, Pym's nemesis, who convinces Pym to give his niece Trish an artificial arm he's crafted as a sign of good will (Trish lost her real arm in one of Egghead's machinations). But Egghead knows Trish doesn't trust him and would only accept it if Yellowjacket gave it to her.

Pym complies, but when he places the arm on her, Egghead takes over her mind via remote control. Eggy then threatens to kill her unless Pym infiltrates a government installation and steals a stockpile of adamantium for him. Not wanting to add Trish's death to his current list of failures, Yellowjacket attempts to follow Egghead's orders, but the Avengers intervene and things get real sticky.

Prepare yourself for an ending that you'll never see coming! It's a rough one, folks. W

PICKS

WIZARD's must-read comic books coming out in February

DEATH: THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE #1

Writer: Neil Gaiman
Artists: Chris Bachalo & Mark Buckingham
Release Date: February 13
Cover Price: $2.95

VERTIGO/DC Death, the Sandman's cute little sister with the big job of guiding people from this life into the next, returns in a three-part mini-series created by the same acclaimed team from the first Death series. This time, the story focuses on lovers Hazel and Foxglove, who appeared briefly in the first mini-series.

The story picks up a couple of years later, bringing us up to date on the women. Foxglove's music career is taking off, making her very popular, while Hazel—who was quite pregnant last time around—has had her baby and is being drawn to family and hearth. "Neil wanted to use this story to examine the music industry and how it affects people," explains Chris Bachalo. "We follow Foxglove as her career grows, and we see the perks to stardom—and the downside." Hazel too is finding a few bumps in the road, he says. In fact, she's made a mysterious pact with Death that will alter the two lovers' relationship forever.

We're also introduced to three new characters: Boris, Foxglove's personal assistant; Larry, her manager; and Vito, a hunk who's been hired for the evening to escort the still-in-the-closet Foxglove. Much of the story's action is seen through Vito's eyes, as he squires her to high-profile events. "He's the eye of the hurricane that everything is swirling around," Bachalo says. But Larry will also play a pivotal role before issue three winds things up, he hints. "I don't want to give away too much, but Larry is very much involved in what's happening."

Bachalo can't reveal too much, however. He'll be penciling the first two issues before turning over both penciling and inking on the final issue to Mark Buckingham due to scheduling problems. "I haven't seen the third script," he admits. "I'm like the fans—I can't wait to see how it ends."

CAPTAIN AMERICA #450

Writer: Mark Waid
Artists: Ron Garney & Dennis Rodier
Release Date: February 6
Cover Price: $1.50

MARVEL In Captain America's last story arc (and the first by the new creative team), Cap teamed up with the Red Skull, found Sharon Carter and foiled the bad guys. So everything's back to normal, right?

Think again. "As a result of those actions, Cap has been branded a traitor," explains writer Mark Waid. "He has a hard time defending himself when the first words out of his mouth are, 'I allied myself with the Red Skull, and I was hanging out with Sharon Carter, an ex-S.H.I.E.L.D. agent who's in the country illegally.' "

But this is Captain America, right? Hasn't he built up a little faith and goodwill with the American people after saving our collective butts about a jillion times? "He has," Waid admits. "These actions alone wouldn't convict him. But there's another piece of evidence that *absolutely* damns him." And naturally, Waid teases that in order to find out why Cap becomes "The Man Without A Country" for this four-issue arc, we're gonna have to read the book.

But that's no hardship, as Waid and artist Ron Garney have turned *Captain America* into a comic that everyone's talking about. And they're not just raving about the stories, either. "Readers are reacting spectacularly to Ron Garney's artwork," Waid says. "What I like about it is that he doesn't draw like somebody else. He's got his own style that's not just a Flavor of the Month knock-off."

Sharon Carter plays a pivotal role in this story too, he notes. "She makes a great counterpoint to Cap. He really believes in this country, and she doesn't believe in it at all." One other thing: Waid, who begins scripting *The Avengers* with #400, mentions that Cap fans might want to check out *Avengers* #398 and #399, on which Waid is "advising." A word to the wise.

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #8

PICKS

Writer: Kurt Busiek
Artists: Pat Olliffe & Al Vey
Release Date: February 13
Cover Price: 99 cents! (No lie!)

MARVEL The best thing about this title—besides the price—is that it works on many levels. Telling tales from Spider-Man's early years, it's unrelated to the current Spidey continuity and presents single-issue stories that can be both understood and enjoyed by new readers. Yet it also weaves around those already-told early adventures, offering insight and enhancements for those familiar with Spider-Man's Silver Age years.

"Every issue is designed as a good jumping-on point, and this issue is no exception," says writer Kurt Busiek. "For those unfamiliar with the other Spidey titles, it's got everything that makes Spidey cool: the secret identity, powers, supporting cast, villains, action, jokes and witty remarks—the whole deal. But for those familiar with his past, this issue explores an important character in a way we haven't seen before."

At the story's center is a new character called the Headsman, a high-tech executioner who swings a pretty mean electrified axe. He joins with the Enforcers, a mob-run group that wants to rub out the wall-crawler. What none of them knows is that the Headsman was created by industrialist Norman Osborn, who wants to gain control of the mob. Says Busiek, "This story gives long-time readers an early look at Osborn," who later became the first Green Goblin. "But it also gives them and first-time readers the chance to see a new character in action for the first time."

The story is told from the point of view of Harry Osborn, Norman's son and Peter's future roommate. "Harry wants to connect with his dad, who's becoming distant and abrasive," Busiek explains. Between those ill-fated efforts, Harry finds time to date a high school classmate named Gwen Stacy. All that for a buck—and a penny back too!

—Picks written by Craig Shutt

MORE PICKS

AQUAMAN #19

DC COMICS Aquaman slaps on his hikin' gear and heads off to the Himalayas. Why, you may ask? 'Cause he's off visiting an Atlantean city way up on top, silly. Anyways, he bumps into that nasty Ocean Master fella and things get...wet! Plus, he ain't a crappy li'l sidekick anymore! Garth (a.k.a. Aqualad) shows up with a whole bunch o' new powers, proving that he's not the weak-ass wuss-boy everyone thinks he is. Yeah, right. By Peter David, Marty Egeland and Howard Shum. **$1.75**

BATMAN #529

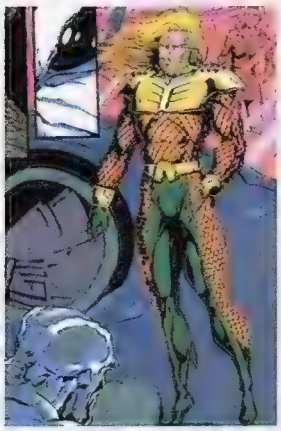
DC COMICS It's Part 6 of the whole "Contagion" fiasco. Things're lookin' up when Azrael comes to Gotham with what seems to be a cure for the deadly plague that's offin' most of Gotham's citizens. Batman gives the possible vaccine to Poison Ivy, who tries to run it to the barricaded Babylon Towers in order to help the city's most powerful citizens. Never trust a woman. By Doug Moench, Kelley Jones and John Beatty. **$1.95**

BONE #23

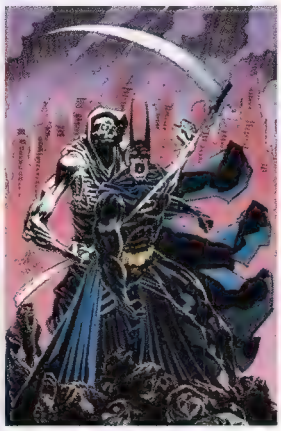
IMAGE Wakka, wakka! It's fun time again here in Boneville! Things lighten up around these parts as Fone Bone meets the creature that's been scarin' the beejeezus outta everyone in Barrelhaven. But it's just a li'l baby rat creature cub. And it's soooo cute! Awww. By Jeff Smith, who says, "Fone Bone, walking down the street, comes face to face with an abandoned baby rat creature. What happened is the rat creatures have evacuated the valley. It's part of their military technique. They just disappear and you let your guard down. But, unfortunately, this little cub got left behind. Thorn is not gonna be too pleased with it and Gran'ma Ben is absolutely gonna be beside herself when she sees this cub." **$2.95**

DAREDEVIL #351

MARVEL D-Man's back! D-Man? Oh, no. That guy sucks. And he's bald! No one likes bald men! We all know they smell weird and they're sterile. And...oh, wait. That's DD! The original yellow and black Daredevil is back for good! It's a new beginning for ol' Hornhead as he starts his life anew (again) with Foggy, Karen Page and, quite possibly, some guy called Matt Murdock. Y'know, not only is this book finally readable again, but it's pretty darn good! By J.M. DeMatteis, Ron Wagner and Bill Reinhold. **$1.95**



AQUAMAN #19



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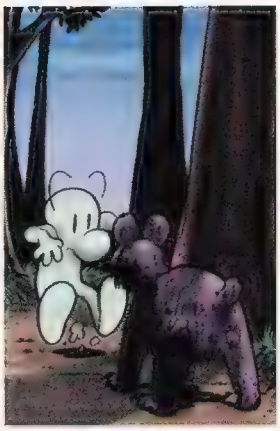


BONE #23

DAREDEVIL #351

DETECTIVE COMICS #696

DC COMICS Get yer surgical masks on, 'cause it's Part 8 of "Contagion." Looks like ol' Robin's comin' down with the disease (the horror of syphilis). While Tim Drake's getting ready to go the way of his predecessor, Batman and Gordon are trapped in the burning Babylon Towers. By Chuck "Hacking" Dixon, Graham "Wheezing" Nolan and Scott "Sniffling" Hanna. **$1.95**

FLASH #112

DC COMICS Yes, it's *another* Flash. These guys must have some family reunion! Anyways, following the tragic events of "Dead Heat," the surviving (gulp!) speedsters bid a fond farewell to one of their own. But hey, who's that new speedster in town? And just what does he have in store for our beloved Keystone City? By Mark Waid, Anthony Castrillo and Hanibal Rodriguez. **$1.75**

GENERATION X #14

MARVEL You think you've got it bad as a teenager? Feelin' fat, ugly and funny-lookin'? Geez. Give it a rest already. This book's chock full o' *real* freaks! Joining the jollies this ish is that barrel o' laughs, Bishop, as Emplate takes on the team in a nasty li'l brawl. By Scott Lobdell and some artist guys. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #73

DC COMICS "Hero Quest," Part 3 (of 3). Ol' Kyle finishes off his just-what-the-heck-makes-a-good-hero-anyway schtick by visiting Gateway City and its resident heroine Wonder Woman. But Wondie's perspective on heroes ain't exactly what Kyle was expecting. By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Romeo Tanghal. Marz says of the ish, "Kyle finds himself in Gateway City to solicit Wonder Woman's advice. Unfortunately, he ends up getting pummeled by her. Everything comes out in the wash, but in the beginning of the book we throw readers right into Kyle getting trashed by Wonder Woman. There's nothing more fun to write than an Amazon at the height of her anger. Kyle doesn't even have much of a chance to fig-

MORE PICKS

ure out what he's learned from his experiences. The end of the issue leads into a storyline [#74-#75] that will introduce a new sort of intergalactic villain. It'll also put him in proximity to Donna Troy, which is an awkward situation." **$1.75**

HITMAN #1

DC COMICS Meet Tommy Monaghan. He's just your typical meta-human assassin-for-hire who goes around huntin' down other meta-humans. This ish starts a lovely li'l three-parter where Mr. Man is hired to bust into Arkham and off the Joker. Y'know what that means…yep, a certain flyin' rodent ain't gonna be too happy. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #440

MARVEL "Ghosts of the Future," Part 5 (of 5). What's the best way to stop the Hulk? A triple-bean and ham burrito with anchovies? Yeah, that might do it, but those Hulkbusters didn't think of it first. Instead, they send Thor to take ol' Green Jeans down, and when that fails (wuss), they drop a freakin' bomb on him! A BIG bomb. By Peter David, Angel Medina and Robin Riggs. **$1.95**

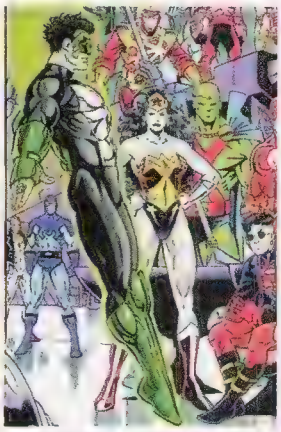
IRON MAN #327

MARVEL I got a question. I know the Avengers went back in time to grab a 19-year-old Tony Stark in order to defeat today's traitorous scumbag Stark. But what happens when this 19-year-old punk goes nutso? Whadda they do then, huh? What, are they gonna go back in time and get some 8-year-old with a pot on his head (just like in that Assistant Editor's Month issue of *Iron Man*) to take 'im down? Sheesh. Anyways, this ish sees a new world, life and yep, even love for ol', er, young Shellhead. By Terry Kavanagh, Jimmy Cheung and Mark McKenna. **$1.50**

KANE #13

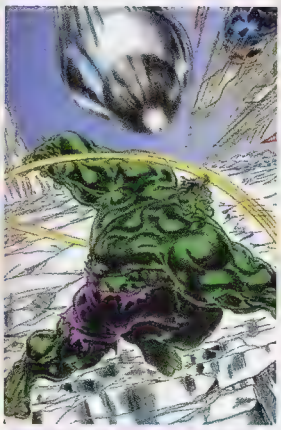
DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS It's rough bein' a cop. You've really gotta give those guys (and gals!) credit. I mean, they're takin' their lives into their hands every time they put those uniforms on. Take Officers Donahue and Perez, for example. After tonight, they're gonna wish they had stayed home, rather than brave the streets of New Eden! By Paul "I have the coolest company name in the world" Grist. **$3.50**

GENERATION X #14



GREEN LANTERN #73

HITMAN #1



THE INCREDIBLE HULK #440

MARVEL VERSUS DC #3

MARVEL "Are you ready to ruuuuuuuumble?" Oh, BABY! This is it, kids. Your votes finally get turned into action. It's the five big DC/Marvel brawls (i.e. The Main Event) to decide the fate of both their universes. Finally, *finally* we'll get to see Captain America kick Batman's ass up around his ears! Plus, you'll witness the birth of a brand-new superhero who'll be shared by both DC and Marvel. How the heck are they gonna do that? Read the book and find out! By Ron Marz, Claudio Castellini, Dan Jurgens, Paul Neary and Josef Rubinstein. **$3.95**

THE MAXX #23

IMAGE Poor Bill. He's so freakin' depressed that he's considerin' killin' himself, and only Sarah, her hand and the power can stop him. Well, why don't they just try talking things out? Y'know, nothing in life is worth killin' yourself over. There's so many great things you'd be missin', like kittens, Twinkies and midgets! And besides, you'd never learn the identities of that strangely familiar homeless woman and her son, who suddenly pop into Sarah's life. By Sam Kieth and Bill Messner-Loebs. **$1.95**

MONKEYMAN & O'BRIEN SPECIAL

DARK HORSE COMICS Yeah, it's basically a reprint, but it's so freakin' good we couldn't resist promotin' this li'l ditty. Here's the skinny: There's this really, really smart gorilla from another dimension (just like "Gorillas in the Mist!"), and a gorgeous, super-strong gal scientist who have teamed up to take down all the weird and wacky B-movie-type creatures that keep invading the planet! Really good stuff by one of the best artists (and a pretty good writer) in the biz, Art Adams. **$2.50**

PREACHER #13

VERTIGO/DC "Hunters," Part 1 (of 4). Hey, Cassidy's back! Wahoo! It's a new turnin' point for the gang as two societies start huntin' after Jesse and friends. First there's The Grail, an order holding the world's deepest, darkest secret (Pamela Anderson's really a guy!) and the Gomorrah People, led by Jesus de Sade. Those Gomorrahs are some wacky cult freaks who love to do…uh…perform severe rudenesses to animals. Run, Benji, run! By Garth Ennis

MORE PICKS

and Steve Dillon. And you bet your sweet ass this is for you mature readers out there! **$2.50**

ROBIN #28

DC COMICS It's the heart-stopping conclusion to "Contagion!" For Robin, that is! It seems Azrael finally makes it to the Batcave (Give 'im a break—he had to fight his way through the National Guard!) with the antidote that'll save Robin's life. But it seems he's too late! D'oh! By Chuck "Robin Killer" Dixon, Mike "I'd Rather Kill Alfred" Wieringo and Stan "Let's Off Harold Instead" Woch. Dixon says, "It's a big moment of truth for Catwoman: Will she do the right thing? Will Azrael save the day or will we be looking for a new Robin? And it is the finale to the 'Contagion' storyline." **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #37

VERTIGO/DC "The Mist," Part 1 (of 4). Hey, it's a crossover, kinda! Some hush-hush, secret defense meeting brings Ted Knight (ex-artist of "Cosmic Cow" and also the Golden Age Starman!) sniffing around. It also attracts the attention of some mysterious guy with a wacky device that turns people into mist! And, wouldja believe this tale has some serious impact on the future of that funky *Starman* comic too? By Matt Wagner, Steven Seagle and Guy Davis. And yep, this one's suggested for mature folks. **$2.25**

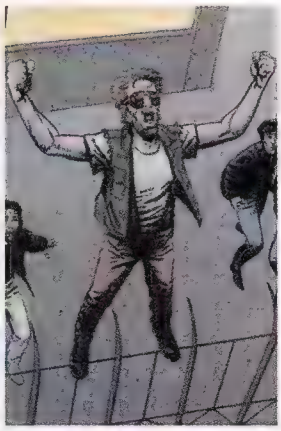
SCUD THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN #11

FIREMAN PRESS As confusing as *The X-Files*, yet 10 times funnier! This ish sees Scud battling a whacked-out astronaut werewolf who plans on devouring the Earth. (Now, that's just darn rude!) It's up to our hero (that's Scud) to stop this astrowolf in time or Jeff, Drywall and the Earth itself are doomed! Hey, maybe Capwolf's gonna show up and save the day! By Mondy Carter and Rob Schrab. Schrab says, "The werewolf releases his master plan: He wants to be the first werewolf on the moon. So he gets onto the moon and, as soon as he sets foot on it, he de-evolves from a werewolf form to a baboon form to an iguana to a mudfish to a jellyfish to a single cell amoeba; it keeps on going down and down and down. And then he turns into a black hole. So there's this giant black hole with the intelligence of the human being that [it] used to be. Scud's gotta figure out a way to defeat this giant werehole." **$2.95**

IRON MAN #327

MARVEL VS. DC #3

MONKEYMAN & O'BRIEN SPECIAL



PREACHER #13

WHAT I'M READING

name: **Chuck Dixon**

occupation: **Writer of DC's *Robin, Detective Comics* and *Catwoman*, and Image's *Team 7***

currently reads: "I always read *Wolverine*. Larry Hama's writing is just aces. I try to achieve Hamaness in everything I write. *Superboy*'s good stuff. Karl [Kesel] always tries to entertain and, for my money, always succeeds. The other one's a pretentious pick, but I actually really like it. I really like *Eightball*. Daniel Clowes is some kind of genius. He always breaks new grounds storytelling-wise. His stories aren't always comprehensible, but they're always compelling. I've always liked his stuff."

AT A GLANCE!

A listing of the high-profile books shipping in February

Action Comics #720 (DC Comics) Whoa! Lois calls off her engagement to Clark! **$1.95**

The All New Exiles #5 (Malibu) The Tradesmen get revenge by destroying a relationship within the Exiles. **$2.50**

Amazing Spider-Man #410 (Marvel) Part 2 of "Web of Carnage" sees the birth of Spider-Carnage! **$1.50**

Batman: Shadow of the Bat #49 (DC Comics) Part 7 of "Contagion" sees Poison Ivy attempting to sell the vaccine for tons o' cash! **$1.95**

Cable #30 (Marvel) It's Nate against Cable. 'Nuff said. **$1.95**

Cyberforce #20 (Image) Ripclaw and Ballistic get close to that alien thingie that wasted Cyberdata. **$2.50**

Evil Ernie: Straight to Hell #5 (Chaos! Comics) Lady Death's sent to the unknown as Ernie battles Pagan in Hell. **$2.95**

Excalibur #96 (Marvel) Mountjoy rounds up some shapeshifters and launches a horrifying plan (another X-book?). **$1.95**

Gen^{13}: Ordinary Heroes #1 (Image) Adam Hughes writes and draws this mini-series pitting Gen^{13} against an unknown menace threatening millions. **$2.50**

Professor X and the X-Men #6 (Marvel) The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants kidnaps Warren Worthington. **99¢**

Sensational Spider-Man #3 (Marvel) Part 1 of "Web of Carnage" has a savage symbiote on the loose, even though Kasady's still in Ravencroft. **$1.95**

NEXT PAGE →

MORE PICKS

ROBIN #28

SIN CITY: THAT YELLOW BASTARD #1

SIN CITY: THAT YELLOW BASTARD #1 (OF 6)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE It's another rough one. Hartigan's a good cop who's finishing his last day. Then it's off to retire and spend time with the wife back home. After 30 years, it's about time. But just one hour before quittin' time, he gets a tip that'll wrap up that one final loose end. There's a young girl out there in the hands of some psycho, and ol' Hartigan's ready to go out in style! This title, which is suggested for mature readers, is by Frank Miller. Hey, 10 bucks says there's an anti-Marvel letter/editorial somewhere in this book. That wacky Frank. **$2.95**

STARMAN #18

DC COMICS It's a tale of old, as the Golden Age Sandman takes on his arch-nemesis the Mist. Now, where have we heard about that guy before...hmmm...oh, yeah! He's part of that four-part storyline starting in *Sandman Mystery Theatre* this month. Be sure to check it out! By James Robinson, Tony Harris and Wade Von Grawbadger. **$2.25**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #10

ABSTRACT STUDIOS Things are movin' fast! Katchoo gets out o' the hospital to discover that she and Francine've been evicted from their house and now must share a one-room apartment. The problem is that Freddie's trying to convince Francine to come back to him, even though he's real close to marrying some other woman. *And*, David forces Katchoo to tell him exactly where the two of them stand! Whew! Great stuff by Terry Moore. **$2.75**

SUPERBOY #26

DC COMICS "Losin' It," Part 2 (of 6). Remember that Superman villain Deathtrap? Well, he's got this daughter called Snare, see. And she wants to impress Daddy (just like all good girls wanna do), so she heads to Hawaii hoping to trap Superboy. But he's smarter than that, ain't he? Uh oh. By Karl Kesel, Staz Johnson and Doug Hazlewood. **$1.95**

MORE PICKS

THOR #497

MARVEL Rumor has it that Marvel may cancel *Thor*. That would suck. Here's an idea: instead of giving up on one of Marvel's flagship superhero titles, why not try and revitalize the book with the two magic words that fans have wanted to see associated with Thor again for a long, long time: Walt Simonson. C'mon, Walt, only you can save the Thunder God now. Don't say thee nay! By William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato Jr. **$1.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #331

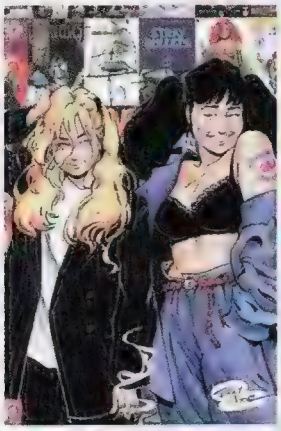
MARVEL It's the ultimate showdown between your mutant pals and that ice-cold babe the White Queen. But she's kinda good now, isn't she? Unless...maybe the White Queen's not really our Emma Frost, but an evil Emma from a parallel dimension where everything is a dark, twisted version of our reality! Mmmm...nah. By Scott Lobdell and Jumpin' Joe Madureira. **$1.95**

WILDC.A.T.S #27

IMAGE Looks like Emp (one of only two superhero midgets) and Zealot (one of several hundred top-heavy superheroines) aren't enjoyin' themselves too much on Khera. They no longer share that same bond with each other anymore and, as you get a look behind the scenes of the Kheran Senate, Emp discovers that his toughest battle isn't against the Daemonites, but against Zealot herself! Meanwhile, the 'C.A.T.s down on Earth have to contend with a huge gang war, and there's nothing they can do 'bout it. By Alan Moore and Scott Clark. **$2.50**

X-MEN #51

MARVEL In this funtastic issue, Bishop, Gambit and—ahem—Beast (Those silly X-Men don't realize that it's really the evil Beast from the "Age of Apocalypse." Tee hee.) jump on a runaway train that's been converted into a terrifying test center for a Legacy Virus cure! Sounds just like that great flick, "Silver Streak." By Mark "I saved Captain America" Waid and Pascual "I ate too much cheese" Ferry. **$1.95**



STRANGERS IN PARADISE #10

SUPERBOY #26

AT A GLANCE! (CONT'D.)

Shi #8 (Crusade Entertainment) While Shi dons a new costume, a surprise guest from Japan arrives to help her with her out-of-control life. **$2.95**

Spawn #44-#45 (Image) The new warrior angel Tiffany heads to Earth to seek vengeance on Spawn and Angela. **$1.95 each**

Spawn/WildC.A.T.s #2 (Image) Spawn and the 'C.A.T.s head to 2015 to fight their arch-foe, Ipsissimus! **$2.50**

Spider-Man #67 (Marvel) Part 3 of "Web of Carnage" sees Spider-Carnage and Kaine duke it out. **$1.95**

Storm #3 (Marvel) Storm uncovers the truth behind Gene Nation's terrorism. **$2.95**

Superman #111 (DC Comics) Cat Grant takes over GBS when Vinnie Edge is canned. **$1.95**

Superman: The Man of Steel #55 (DC Comics) While Clark puts the moves on Lori Lemaris, Lois moves in on Alpha Centurion and Jeb Friedman. **$1.95**

Vengeance of Vampirella #23 (Harris Comics) Vampi takes on the forces o' darkness all by her lonesome. **$2.95**

Weapon Zero #1 (Image) The team members start getting used to each other, just as a new threat appears planetside. **$2.50**

X-Factor #121 (Marvel) The team joins Forge in a battle against Sabretooth. **$1.95**

The X-Files #15 (Topps) While UFO huntin', Scully and Mulder are kidnapped by a Midwestern survivalist group. **$2.95**

X-Force #53 (Marvel) Will the X-Ternals' final secret be revealed before they're killed? **$1.95**

X-Man #14 (Marvel) The conclusion to the Cable/Nate encounter! **$1.95**

CBIQ

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

HEY! If this doesn't put you in a lovin' mood, we don't know what will. Here's a special hugs, kisses and sweetness edition of the C.B.I.Q. to test your awe-inspiring comic knowledge against. So grab your sweetie, hug them close and go to town!

1. After his first clash with Doomsday, what were Superman's last words to Lois Lane before he "died" in her arms?
A) "Doomsday...is he...is he..."
B) "Lois...I love you..."
C) "Did I stop...Doomsday..."
D) "Oy! I've got such a pain..."

2. Who is the Superior Squad's Miles Mando?
A) Bleeding Heart
B) Heart of Darkness
C) Purple Heart
D) All of the above

3. Why did Wonder Woman's loving mother allow Artemis to replace Diana as WW?
A) She thought Diana was too Americanized
B) Artemis was much more "butch"
C) Hercules disapproved of Diana's job as Wonder Woman and demanded that she be replaced
D) She had "visions" of Wonder Woman dying, so to prevent her daughter's death, she demanded that a new tournament be waged, and Artemis won that contest

4. Which Gen[13]er has a crush on Grunge?
A) Fairchild
B) Freefall
C) Rainmaker
D) Lynch

5. We know Spider-Man is a "swinger," but which of the following characters did he (or his clone) not have an intimate relationship with?
A) Spider-Woman I
B) Betty Brant
C) Mary Jane
D) Black Cat

6. After the relationship between Kathleen Dare and Tony Stark (a.k.a. Iron Man) ended, what did Miss Dare dare to do?
A) She jumped out of a birthday cake butt-nekkid at Tony's birthday party and won his love back
B) She went out with Tony's friend, James Rhodes
C) She started stalking Tony as Madame Masque
D) She took it badly and put a bullet in Tony's chest

7. In the Image Universe, what are the names of SuperPatriot's pro-American sidekicks, who also happen to be his own love-children from a free-lovin' 1960s romantic liaison?
A) Free Spirit and Jack Flag
B) Law and Order
C) Liberty and Justice
D) Battlestar and Miss America

8. At Nightwing's and Starfire's ill-fated wedding, who was Dick Grayson's best man?
A) Wally West
B) Bruce Wayne
C) Roy Harper
D) Garfield Logan

9. What uninvited gate-crasher was so rude as to attack the guests at the wedding of Quicksilver and Crystal?
A) Ultron VII
B) Dr. Doom
C) Kang the Conqueror
D) The Mole Man

10. Who is Aquaman's current Valentine?
A) Dolphin
B) Mera
C) Marrina
D) Fathom

11. The Avengers' resident heartthrob Hank Pym has been married twice. What happened to his first wife?
A) Pym, through the use of science, gave her the ability to shrink and grow wings so that she could be his crimefighting partner; she is the Avenger known as the Wasp
B) She was kidnapped by the godless communists, who mutated her into a giant brain
C) She and Pym were divorced, and she now lives in Cottage Grove, Minnesota, where she makes a living as a waitress at DeMori's Backdoor Lounge
D) She died from a bad reaction to Pym Particles

12. Every year, the Thing sends a Valentine to his favorite aunt. What's her name?
A) Auntie Mame
B) Auntie Grazelda
C) Aunt Petunia
D) Aunt Man

13. How did Nocturna (white-skinned freak and adoptive mother to the dead Robin, Jason Todd) seduce Batman?
A) She threatened to expose his secret identity
B) She had plastic surgery that made her resemble Bruce Wayne's long-dead mother, and then played upon his deeply repressed Oedipal complex
C) She used her skills as a master hypnotist
D) She used a narcotic aphrodisiac perfume that attracted the testosterone-laden Batman

14. Who's *not* an alternate reality offspring of Cyclops and Jean Grey (or Maddy Pryor)?
A) Rachel Summers (a.k.a. Phoenix)
B) X-Man
C) Cable
D) Alex Summers (a.k.a. Havok)

15. What superteam does the Savage Dragon's nympho girlfriend, Rapture, belong to?
A) WildC.A.T.s
B) Freak Force
C) WetWorks
D) The Deadly Berserkin' Young Blood Pool Cyber-Alliance of the NewMen Vanguard Brigade

16. The Savage Dragon's ex-girlfriend, Debbie Harris, was killed by:
A) Savage Dragon when he went on a rampage.
B) a jealous ex-boyfriend.
C) Rapture.
D) Overlord.

17. What was the name of Betty Banner's late ex-husband?
A) Gary Campbell
B) Glenn Talbot
C) Douglas Ross
D) Bill Bixby

18. What is the name of Impulse's sugar-sweet cousin from the 30th century?
A) Jodi Janis
B) Jenny Ranzz
C) Jennifer Aniston
D) Jenni Ognats

19. Who had the soul that was so darn pure, the evil Neron couldn't take it ?
A) Superman
B) Captain Marvel
C) The Spectre
D) Lobo

20. When Wolverine first got Mariko Yashida to consent to marriage, what was her excuse for dumping him at the altar?
A) Embarrassingly, she found out they were related, so she committed *hari-kari*.
B) Her father objected to the marriage because he thought Logan was an unemployed, lazy bum!
C) She was under the mind control of Mastermind.
D) Well, Wolverine was starting to get a gut and his hair was thinning and he just wasn't as thoughtful as he used to be, etc....

THIS TIME AROUND, WE'LL BE GRADIN' YOU AGAINST THE UP AND DOWN SIDES TO BEING A SUPERHERO'S GIRLFRIEND. SO, THE MORE DISTASTEFUL THEIR FATE, THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE. LOOK IN THIS ISSUE'S BULLPEN FOR THE ANSWERS.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	Green Lantern's tomato: Alex was chopped up and stuffed into a refrigerator by Major Force/she found out if the light goes out when you close the door
5-14	Daredevil's ball & chain: Karen Page left DD to become an actress, but instead became a porno queen and heroin addict/she got a free hit of smack by selling DD's secret identity
15-19	Spidey's chick: Gwen Stacy's neck was broken when thrown off a bridge/she never got to see how Marvel would destroy Spidey with that embarrassing clone story
20	Cap's wench: Sharon Carter got blowed up/Hey...Sharon's alive, AND got to see how cool Cap would become under the team of Mark Waid & Ron Garney! Wa-hoooo!

PREMIERE EDITION

BATMAN

Master Series™

TRADING CARDS

"The Dark Knight is Dead?..."

MUSEUM QUALITY TRADING CARDS

EXCLUSIVE FULLY PAINTED ARTWORK

AN ORIGINAL BATMAN EPIC IN ONE CARD SET

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THE MYSTERY UNFOLDS JANUARY '96

BATMAN

Master Series

TRADING CARDS

"WHO could hAve KilIEd HiM?"

ORIGINAL PAINTINGS BY LEADING COMIC ARTISTS

Scott Hampton Dermot Power
Duncan Fegredo Carl Critchlow
Dave Dorman

MUSEUM QUALITY TRADING CARDS

90 Basic cards printed on thick stock with foil-stamping

90 Artist's Proof cards printed on extra-thick stock with even more foil-stamping

10 Batman Master Villains cards

6 Batman Spectra-Etch cards painted by top fantasy artists

2 Chromium cards of Batman and The Joker

Sky Box

DC

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Sky Box
"Batman's Greatest Allies & villains Can't solve the Mystery ..."
AN ORIGINAL BATMAN EPIC IN ONE CARD SET WRITTEN BY VETERAN BATMAN WRITER DOUG MOENCH
The Joker has escaped and The Dark Knight is dead...or is he? Gotham Police have found evidence that Batman has been killed and it looks like The Joker pulled the trigger! The only problem is The Joker doesn't remember doing it.
Who did the deed? Join The Joker, Robin and Nightwing as they try to discover the truth and see if you can solve the mystery first!
Pier 13
Two cops on the pier, after finding the cowl
"The Commish ain't gonna like this..."
"Ask me, he relied on the Batman too much anyway."
"Not anymore he won't... but this sure is hard to believe... the Batman gunned down, I mean."
"With The Joker at large, nothin's hard to believe. Go against that maniac enough times, sooner or later you gotta croak... even a vampire bat."
SCOTT HAMPTON
BATMAN Master Series
TRADING CARDS
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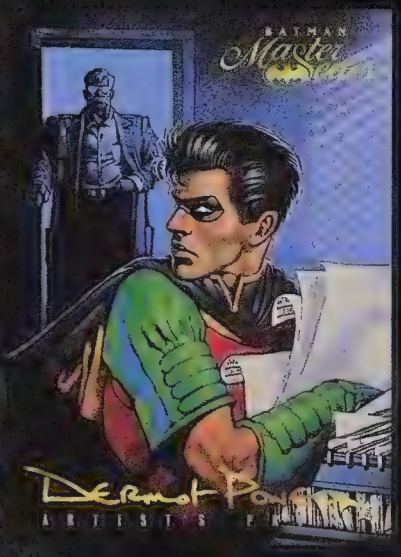
"Can You?"

ARTIST'S PROOF CARDS

1 per pack, 90-card parallel set, 24-pt. card stock with additional foil stamping and exclusive artists' commentaries



BATMAN SPECTRA-ETCH CARDS

6 Batman cards hand-painted by top fantasy artists and rendered in SkyBox's trademarked Spectra-Etch foil technology

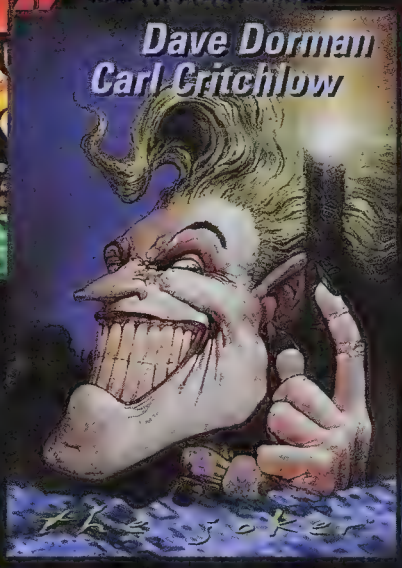
James Warhola Vincent DiFate
Romas Kukalis Nick Jainschigg
Joe DeVito Ken Kelly

BATMAN CHROMIUM AND CLEARCHROME

Chromium cards featuring original paintings of Batman and The Joker

Parallel of each card also in ClearChrome

Dave Dorman
Carl Critchlow



BATMAN MASTER VILLAINS

10 of Batman's greatest foes depicted in all-new original artwork

BATMAN MASTER SERIES CHECKLIST

1 Gotham
2 Arkham Asylum For The Criminally Insane
3 Bulletin!
4 Pier 13
5 Stacked Deck
6 Ghost Of A Ghost
7 He Was Real!
8 Death of a Dark Legend
9 I Did It!
10 Headquarters
11 The Log of Comm. Gordon
12 Sgt. Harvey Bullock
13 Renee Montoya
14 Lt. Lawrence Kitch
15 Sgt. MacKenzie Bock
16 Friends
17 Lt. Sarah Gordon
18 Deathtrap
19 Wayne Manor
20 The Journal of Alfred Pennyworth
21 Destiny
22 Inspiration
23 Year One
24 Killing Joke
25 Secret Passage
26 The Cave
27 Target Practice
28 Three Robins
29 Dick Grayson
30 Jason Todd
31 Death in the Family
32 Tim Drake
33 Wild Joker
34 Suspects
35 More Than Trophies
36 Laughing Batty
37 Catwoman
38 Black Mask
39 Lady Shiva
40 Ra's Al Ghul
41 Talia
42 The Penguin
43 Poison Ivy
44 The Riddler
45 Solitary Madness
46 Hard Copy
47 Bane
48 Mad Hatter
49 Two-Face
50 Killer Croc
51 Man-Bat
52 Scarecrow
53 Red-Handed
54 Clown Prince Of Crime Detection
55 Kitty Killer
56 Masks of Black
57 Double-Mug
58 Did the Demon Do it?
59 Gone with the Demon's Daughter
60 Birdbrained Bumbershooter
61 An Itch Too Far?
62 The Question Is...
63 Sherlock Jokes Strikes Out
64 Dark Angel
65 Crocodile Tears
66 By Zeus!
67 Pulling Strings
68 Tweedledee and Dumber
69 Strange Analysis
70 Master of Fear
71 Keeping Scar
72 Worlds of Madness
73 Uncivil War
74 Jack's Whack
75 Sacred Scare
76 Whodunit Houdini?
77 Past Master of the Future
78 Blunder Gods
79 It's Dead!
80 Teething
81 Secret Ceremony
82 Digging Batty
83 Unrest In Peace
84 Shadow of the Bat
85 The Bat Is Dead, Long Live The Bat
86 Snapped Trap
87 Accomplices
88 Back To Arkham
89 Creatures of the Night
90 CHECKLIST

ARTIST'S PROOF CARDS

Same as basic set

BATMAN MASTER VILLAINS

1 The Joker
2 Two-Face
3 Catwoman
4 The Riddler
5 The Penguin
6 Poison Ivy
7 Ra's Al Ghul
8 Scarecrow
9 Bane
10 Black Mask

BATMAN SPECTRA-ETCH

1 Batman *Ken Kelly*
2 Batman *Vincent DiFate*
3 Batman *Joe DeVito*
4 Batman *Romas Kukalis*
5 Batman *Nick Jainschigg*
6 Batman *James Warhola*

BATMAN CHROMIUM

1 The Joker *Carl Critchlow*
2 Batman *Dave Dorman*

BATMAN CLEAR CHROME

1 The Joker *Carl Critchlow*
2 Batman *Dave Dorman*

BATMAN Master Series TRADING CARDS

PREMIERE EDITION

THE MYSTERY UNFOLDS
JANUARY '96

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BY JOYCE STEEL

MORE COMPANY CROSSOVER CARDS TO CHASE

This Marvel versus DC thing's been playing out like an old "Little House on the Prairie" episode. We all know that somehow, things are gonna work out fine in the end. We just haven't been able to figure out how. But Fleer/SkyBox just dropped a clue.

It seems the sequel to the December *DC versus Marvel* trading card series will be a late February release, tentatively titled *DC versus Marvel 2: Amalgam.* That's right, as in "compound or mixture." The exciting cornerstone of the series will be fused characters from the two universes, including "Spiderboy," an amalgamation of Spider-Man and Superboy; "Dark Claw," a blend of the very best of Batman and Wolverine; and "Super Soldier," a crossover in the truest sense of the word betwixt Captain America and Superman.

"We're creating a new universe," confirms Fleer/SkyBox spokesperson Jodi Lapin.

The series will coincide with an as-yet-unspecified number of comic books addressing the DC/Marvel meld. However, Lapin said, the cards will feature "facts and background information that the books just didn't have room for."

The 90-card series (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99) will be "chased" by three levels of subsets. The first is a nine-card Canvas subset from Dave Dorman, highlighting the "Secret Crisis of Infinity Hour." That's a mini-story within the amalgamation line that won't appear in the books. The second should be a real "blast." It's a nine-card Powerblast homage to classic comic covers of days gone by...with one exception. Artists like Steven Butler, Jerry Ordway and Brian Stelfreeze will render their versions of the covers, substituting the main characters with the fused ones. Both come one in every five packs. The third is a six-card Holo-Pix set; each of its cards offers "the deepest, best hologram you've ever seen," as Lapin raves about the depictions of the six main amalgamated characters. Fans'll find 'em one in every 12 packs.

Also in February, SkyBox will release *Outburst: DC Firepower,* the first embossed set from DC. It's being billed as an 80-card classic character review, and features all-original artwork. In addition, Alan Grant (writer of considerable renown on *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* and *Lobo*) will pen an original story to be featured on all the backs of a 20-card foil-stamped chase set (one in every two packs). Two HoloBurst cards round out the chase card lineup. (Seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49.)

Last but not least, it's time once again for Trekkies to rejoice. Fleer/SkyBox understands your addiction, and provides yet another fix in February with its fourth installment of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation Episode Collection.* These series have been notorious for the high quality with which the producers have digitally transferred the images from the actual master footage to the cards. The 108-card series is chased by six foil-embossed cards (one in every 12 packs) and two dual-image "flip" holograms (one in every 180 packs). (Eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.29.)

COMIC IMAGES

In the "you-can't-ever-get-enough-of-a-good-thing" category: *The Best of Frazetta* is set for a February release from Comic Images. Even better, Frank will be autographing a limited number of cards for random insertion into the series. No one can say exactly how many there'll be, but suffice it to say it won't be more than 500, which will no doubt make them the most valuable cards of the year. Depending upon whom you're talking to and what day it is, you know Frank as either a fundamental influence on the genre...or the almighty deity of comic books, fantasy art and trading cards. This 90-card all-Chromium set will gather the best of Frazetta's works from Comic Images' first two series of his art, and supplement the collection with nine paintings never before seen on cards. The set's chase cards will include a new bonus, a MagnaChrome card shrinkwrapped to each display box (in the hopes that more fans will buy the boxes), along with two MagnaChrome subsets, a six-card and a three-card. All chases are, of course, randomly inserted. (Seven cards per pack, suggested retail $2.29.)

Dark Claw is one of the cool character combos in SkyBox's second *DC versus Marvel* set.

"Worf, would you rather kiss Picard's butt or mine?" SkyBox's fourth *Star Trek: TNG Episode Collection.*

MISCELLANEOUS MERCHANDISE

Intrepid, a division of Australia's Dynamic Marketing, is releasing the first-ever card series based on Dale Keown's Pitt. The late-January, 128-card series includes another first for Keown: animation, in the form of its MegaMotion chase card. The card involved creating 24 closely matched, individual panels of Pitt to form an action scene, which was then transferred to the special-powered plastic stuff that makes the thing work. Don't ask me how.

WildStorm is busily preparing the sequel to its success with last year's *WildStorm Archives Trading Cards*. Set for February release, and cleverly titled *WildStorm Archives Trading Cards—Series Two*, this all-Chromium, 99-card foray will capture many of the studio's most popular covers of 1995.

Graffiti came out of nowhere last fall and produced a solid series based on James Bond's new flick "Goldeneye." (Here's a mini-review: These cards are of good quality, and the collation out of the box is great, with two full sets and a few chase cards, but there are very few bells or whistles. My personal pet peeve is that it's hard to tell what the chase cards are; I got a "JB3" card and I have no idea what it is.) The company is now planning a "Retro Bond" set covering the Sean Connery films (or at least the first few of them) for the spring. It'll mark only the third time in history Connery's had his mug on a card (the first was part of a very rare late '60s Bond set; the second, on the Eclipse bomb of the late '80s).

Finally, romantic card collectors everywhere know the fairy tale of Boris Vallejo, master fantasy artist, and Julie Bell, his former model with whom he fell madly in love and married. Along the way he taught her to paint, and now the two of them are to trading cards what Bruce Willis and Demi Moore are to Hollywood. But this February, they'll have to scoot over a little and make room for Don Maitz and Janny Wurtz (who may become the Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman of cards).

He's the fantasy artist famous for his swashbuckling pirate on the Captain Morgan's spiced rum bottles, and the subject of a 90-card sequel from FPG. She's a Chesley award-winning book cover illustrator whose first series, a 60-card event, is also coming from FPG. Talk about yer Valentine's Day cards!

THE DISH FOR NEXT ISH:

Dynamic Entertainment's *Creator's Alternate Universe Trading Card Set* showcases some of the coolest independent comic art around, including stuff from *A Distant Soil*, *Poison Elves*, *Kabuki*, *Strangers in Paradise*, *Wandering Star* and several others in late February/early March. And Greg and Tim Hildebrandt are busy creating 100 original paintings for an upcoming Topps series on "Star Wars"... W

Joyce Steel will amaze you with her knowledge of "Mork and Mindy" cards.

Graffiti's "Goldeneye" set presents a smashing look at what's been called the best Bond film ever.

InQuest presents HIT THE DECK

The latest in collectible card game news

• Hold the pages! **Wizards of the Coast**, one of the gaming industry's giants, has discontinued its non-CCG products: *Ars Magica*, *Everway*, *Primal Order*, and *RoboRally* are among the casualties. According to Richard Garfield, designer of *Magic: The Gathering* and vice president of research and development, "Wizards of the Coast will continue to explore trading card games in the next year, hopefully bringing card and table games together after that. My expectation is that roleplaying is going to come back. There are too many CCGs out there, and it's a lot easier to put together an RPG, anyway." For now, though, its bye-bye roleplaying and hello collectible card games for WotC!

Several of Wizard of the Coast's non-CCG products will be non-existent soon.

• Without a doubt, the most anticipated project of early summer is SkyBox's ***Star Trek: The Original Series*** collectible card game. Dealing strictly with the 79 episodes from the original 1960s TV series, the game will send you on missions involving Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and the starship Enterprise—which are featured on the four cards needed to play the game, and included with every starter deck. Since everyone playing will have these cards, the points earned from these missions propel *everyone* towards victory; however, missions completed with your own personal array of secondary characters—crew members like Scotty, Chekov, Uhura, and Sulu—count for individual victory points, and not for the group. Art will be screen shots from the TV show, and there will be tons of cards from Nurse Chapel to the villainous Khan to those wacky tribbles.

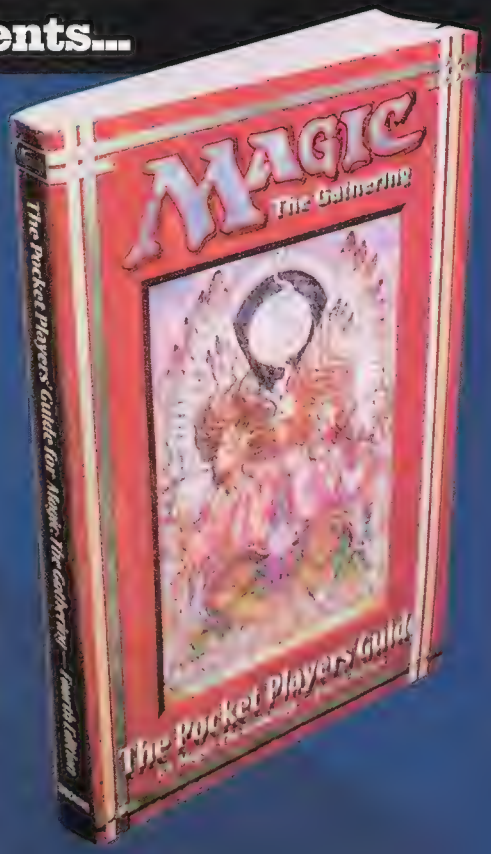
• Ushering in the new year is a lot of brand-new stuff. *Wyvern* has a complete starter set, which gives you everything two people will need to play in one shot—two 60-card decks, rules and a copy of *Wyvern: The Insider's Guide*. There's also ***Chameleon***, the latest expansion set for *Wyvern* which brings a new feature to the game—terrain cards that can turn into dragons. Look for ***Gangland***, another package starter set (Notice a trend here?), which pits gang leaders against each other in a battle for the underworld. Not to mention, both *Battlelords* and *Doomtrooper* broaden their universes with new expansions, ***Genesis*** and ***Mortificator*** respectively.

• And hey, how about this—Decipher's ***Star Wars*** actually came out this past December. Good for you, Decipher—and for many enthused Jedi players. ■ *Michael Searle*

Michael Searle is the editor of Wizard's *sister mag* InQuest, *the all-around grooviest guide to collectible card games.*

Wizards of the Coast Presents...

IT MUST BE MAGIC!



Hey! You've been reading all about that groovy *Magic: The Gathering* game. You know what it's about. You've seen the art. Now here's your chance to win it!

How Do I Do That?

It's a breeze. Just let us know who your favorite *Magic: The Gathering* artist is. You've seen the gallery. You've probably seen the cards. You know these guys.
So tell us who your fave-rave is. Randomly selected entries can net the senders some...

...Magical Prizes!

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive a booster box of *Magic: The Gathering's* super-swell *Ice Age* expansion set, plus a copy of the *Magic: The Gathering Pocket Player's Guide* (Second Edition) and a *Magic: The Gathering* card autographed by their favorite artist!

Second Prize (20): 20 lucky readers will each receive three booster packs of *Ice Age* and a copy of the *Magic: The Gathering Pocket Player's Guide* (Second Edition).

The Legal Dragon

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Wizards of the Coast and their immediate families or employees of that Wizard air freshener company. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form, a standard postcard or a 3 by 5 inch index card and include the name of your favorite *Magic: The Gathering* artist. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: It Must Be Magic Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, [illegible] NY 10920-0118. No mechanical [illegible] completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it [illegible] to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of [illegible] winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. "Hey, Rocky! Watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat!" *Again?* But that trick never [illegible] **[illegible]ries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on April 15, 1996. (Boooooo! Hisss! Tax day!)

For a list of winners, available after April 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: It Must Be Magic Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Wizards of the Coast

This contest is sponsored by Wizards of the Coast, magicians slightly more proficient than David Copperfield.

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: It Must Be Magic Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. The deadline is March 31, 1996 — so start deciding on your fave now!

It Must Be Magic Contest!

DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ **Favorite *Magic: The Gathering* artist**

MARVEL RENTS TITLES TO IMAGE

The early reports have it going something like this: Marvel will take four of its titles (*Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Avengers, Captain America*), sort of lease them to Image creators Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, let Lee and Liefeld produce them as they see fit, and then Marvel has the option to take the four titles back after the lease expires. Lee will be personally penciling *Fantastic Four*, while Liefeld will tackle *Captain America*. Whilce Portacio is reportedly taking over penciling on *Iron Man*, while the *Avengers'* team has yet to be settled upon. A lot remains to be answered, like how this major industry event will affect the market for these titles and their back issues—along with each creator's body of work itself. We'll keep you posted.

All eyes are on Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld as they take over some of Marvel's flagship titles

DC/MARVEL: A GOOD TAG TEAM

It's still too early to tell if the four-issue *Marvel versus DC* mini-series is going to go up in value, but early indications are that it's definitely hot. Issue #1 was a quick sellout, according to retailers we spoke with, and quite a bit of interest has stirred up among fans who are excited about getting to cast their votes for the outcome of the battles.

James Elkins of Comic Connection in Clarksville, Tenn., told us that he ordered extra-heavy on this one and *still* sold out on the first day. "I could have sold 200 more copies," noted James.

by Jon Warren

BAD GIRL REPORT

Demand for Bad Girl books remains strong in most parts of the country, but reports of slower sales are beginning to trickle in. "One thing that would help would be if publishers would get them out on time," said Steve Fishler of Metropolis in New York.

"Delayed release really dampens interest."

Angela, *Cry for Dawn*, *Dawn* and *Lady Death* are still hot items, while others—even *Shi*, according to some reports—have slowed a bit.

NEW AUTOGRAPH PRICE GUIDE

Have you ever gone to a convention, stood in line, and had your favorite comic book artist sign a few of your comics? Then have you ever wondered how much more your comics are worth, after being signed by the very guy who drew them? Well, you can discover the answer to this question by looking it up in our Autograph Price Guide, a new feature we'll be including every month. We list several hundred of the top artists and writers and include a value for their autographs. Values range from one thin buck to several hundred dollars, depending on who the artist or writer is (get a Steve Ditko or Joe Shuster autograph and you're really in luck). Check it out!

THE QUICK LIST

Here are several comics that most retailers are talking about:

• **AKIRA**—Hottest title in the manga market. Issue #1 moved up to a whopping $17; #2 to $11; #3-#6 to $9; #7-#10 up to $8.

• **ANGELA**—The *Angela Special Edition* that came with *Spawn* #32 is a $15-$20 item, according to our recent poll of retailers (the result of your requests for a value on the book). Now you know.

• **CAPTAIN AMERICA**—You think Marvel went to Rob Liefeld too soon? Fans love the storyline by Mark Waid and Ron

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Al Ortega

1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

Gabe Paluzio

2 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega

3 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen13

Al Ortega

4 **Jim Lee**
Gen13; upcoming: *Fantastic Four*

Al Ortega

5 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

6 **Greg Capullo**
Spawn

Jon Gipe

7 **Steven Hughes**
Lady Death

Al Ortega

8 **Frank Miller**
Upcoming: *Sin City: That Yellow Bastard*

9 **Mike Deodato Jr.**
Thor, Avengers, Glory

10 **Bill Tucci**
Shi

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Al Ortega

1 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman

Al Ortega

2 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman, Marvel vs. DC

Al Ortega

3 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Untold Tales of Spider-Man

Bob Martin

4 **Mark Waid**
Captain America; upcoming: *X-Men*

5 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher; upcoming: *Hitman*

Bob Martin

6 **Alan Moore**
From Hell, WildC.A.T.s

J. Schuyler

7 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

8 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern, Marvel vs. DC

9 **James Robinson**
Starman

10 **Stefan Petrucha**
The X-Files

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

WIZARD'S UP & COMING CREATOR

MARTY EGELAND

Right after diving into DC's current *Aquaman* series, this artist began filling each character with loads of visual personality and emotion. He's placed these characters in an underwater home that is far from bland—it's flooded with realism and intense life. His Aquaman has more depth and character than we've seen in years, while his style offers an intense amount of action the Sea King's adventures require and his readers love. With each issue that ships, Egeland's wave of fans is sure to build.

MARKET WATCHERS

Letters to the Price Guide

Q: Does it really make a difference if the signed comic comes with a Certificate of Authenticity?

—Vincent Buencamino, address unknown

A: Yes, a certificate is indeed a valuable commodity, because if you don't have one, there's no proof you didn't sign the bugger yourself. The certificate adds three to five times to the value of the signature. By the way, check out our new autograph price guide in this issue, and let us know what you think of it.

Q: The *Gen13* mini-series contained a coupon for a free ashcan. I've never seen this in your guide. What's it worth?

—Randall Simpson, Cleveland, OH

A: There were actually two *Gen13* ashcans, both of which should be listed in this issue's edition of the price guide. The one you're talking about, *Ashcan #0*, came out the same time as the regular issue #0, and was ordered through the mail by sending four coupons. It was 32 pages and offered the same stories as in the #0 issue. It goes for around $20. Check out the price guide for more facts. The other, *Ashcan #1*, was a 32-page black-and-white small comic that reprinted the same story as was featured in the first issue of the mini-series. It came out in early 1994.

Q: I've got the specially numbered set of the first three issues of *The X-Files*. Can you tell me what those are worth?

Sean Lewis, New Canaan, CT

A: Those are actually second printings from American Entertainment, a popular mail-order retail chain. Currently, we have those listed in the guide (a new listing this issue) for cover price. But keep watching—as hot as *X-Files* has been, these issues could go up.

Q: Please help me! Three years ago, I purchased a GVG copy of *Action Comics* #1 for about $10,000. I spent close to $3,000 having it restored to an apparent VFNM (for aesthetic purposes, as I have no intention of ever selling it). How much is it worth? I've been told by several dealers and collectors that similar copies have sold between $55,000 and $75,000. However, others have told me the book is worth the current market value of its original condition, plus the cost of its restoration (approx. $20,000). Who's right?

Rick Whitelock, address withheld

A: A veritable book can be written on this one. The quick answer is rare books (whether they're in Good or Very Fine condition) are worth what similar copies have brought, because they are so rare and all. Not many of these ever surface, you see. But, if you want to sell yours for $20,000, call me.

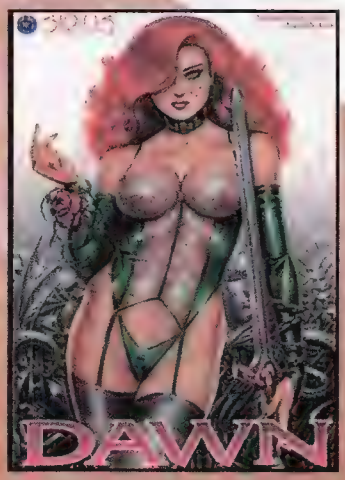
We can't print all the letters we get, so if you want an answer to your question, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope along with your letter. We still can't guarantee an answer, but you'll have a much better chance of getting a response. So long till next time!

—Jon Warren

Send your letters to:
Market Watchers
c/o Jon Warren
P.O. Box 2512
Chattanooga, TN 37409
Or send e-mail directly to Jon himself:
JonRWarren@aol.com

Garney that began with issue #444, pushing up the price for this baby to $4; other issues in the hotter-than-it's-been-in-years series followed suit.

• **CREED**—Creator Trent Kaniuga's engaging work has fans loving this title. Prices moved up like this: the first series (Hall of Heroes) #1 up to $26 and #2 to $28; the ongoing series (Lightning) #1 hopped up to $5.

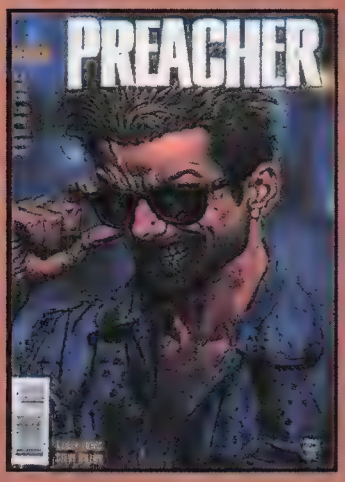


• **CRY FOR DAWN & DAWN**—Okay, we'll say it again. Super-hot! Dawn's still got definite legs, so watch out. Artist Joe Linsner is on his way, big-time.

• **EGYPT**—This surreal Vertigo title has fans raving. Issue #1 moved up to $3.50; #2 to $3. Retailers are singing the blues 'cause they didn't order enough to begin with, and now none are to be found anywhere. What were the print runs on the early issues, like 10,000 copies or something similarly ridiculous?

• **IMPULSE**—This one's more than just a flash in the pan. Issue #1 stayed level this month, but #2 didn't, moving up to $3.75; #3 went to $3; #4 and 5 to $2.50. Definitely a "Market Watch" special.

• **MILK AND CHEESE**—Everyone's favorite dairy products are raucously causing one of the big successes in the small press market. Issue #1 popped up to $16; #2 to $9; #3 to $8; and #4 to $6.



• **PREACHER**—Watch out, we've got a fire going on here. Just try finding early issues, fan-people. They ain't out there. Retailers have been very cautious of late, for a number of reasons; in this case, they didn't take a chance on a title that sounded like Sunday services. Initial orders were low, and now back issues are non-existent. Why is it hot? Because it's a great story! You should try it—although the early issues are tough to find. Issue #1 moved up to $12; #2 to $9; #3 to $7; and all the rest went up, too.

• **THB**—If you didn't jump on this particular bandwagon early, you're frankly screwed. Prices on this super series about a seven-foot-tall inflatable rubber man are headed for the stratosphere. Issue #1 bounced up to $30 this month; #2 to $20; #3 to $6; and all the others went up too. People obviously know this title's worth picking up, and not just for the dough.

• **VAMPIRELLA #113**—The last issue in the Warren/Harris series continues to be a hot item, with retailers reporting that finding one is hard to do, yet selling one is easy. It moved up to $50 this month—and like Vampi herself, it can't be stopped.

Jon Warren would be just an average guy if it weren't for those pointy ears and hooved feet of his.

TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of DECEMBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for December. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's rankings.

1. **DC versus Marvel #1 (DC/Marvel)**
2. X-Men #49 (Marvel)
3. Uncanny X-Men #329 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #40 (Image)
5. Spawn #41 (Image)
6. Wolverine #98 (Marvel)
7. Gen[13] #7 (Image)
8. Generation X #12 (Marvel)
9. Gen[13]/Maxx #1 (Image)
10. X-Man #12 (Marvel)
11. X-Force #51 (Marvel)
12. Storm #1 (Marvel)
13. X-Factor #119 (Marvel)
14. Sensational Spider-Man #1 (Marvel)
15. Cable #28 (Marvel)
16. Amazing Spider-Man #408 (Marvel)
17. X-Men: Askani'Son #1 (Marvel)
18. Excalibur #94 (Marvel)
19. Spider-Man #65 (Marvel)
20. Spectacular Spider-Man #231 (Marvel)
21. Web of Scarlet Spider #4 (Marvel)
22. Archangel #1 (Marvel)
23. Logan #1 (Marvel)
24. WildC.A.T.s #25 (Image)
25. Professor X and the X-Men #4 (Marvel)
26. Batman #527 (DC)
27. Superman #109 (DC)
28. Shi #7 (Crusade)
29. Witchblade #2 (Image)
30. Adventures of Superman #532 (DC)
31. Action Comics #718 (DC)
32. Superman: The Man of Steel #53 (DC)
33. Detective Comics #694 (DC)
34. WetWorks #13 (Image)
35. Carnage: Mind Bomb #1 (Marvel)
36. The X-Files #13 (Topps)
37. Star Wars: H. to the Empire #3 (Dark Horse)
38. Star Wars: Splinter...Mind's Eye #1 (D. Horse)
39. Incredible Hulk #438 (Marvel)
40. Spider-Man Team-Up #2 (Marvel)
41. Star Wars: Boba Fett—B. on B. (Dark Horse)
42. Batman: Legends...Dark Knight #80 (DC)
43. Maximage #1 (Image)
44. Phoenix Resurrection: Genesis (Malibu)
45. Phoenix Resurrection: Revelations (Mal.)
46. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #47 (DC)
47. Spider-Man/Punisher Part 2 (Marvel)
48. Spider-Man: The Final Adventure #3 (Mar.)
49. S. Wars: Tales...Jedi—S. War #5 (D. Horse)
50. Spider-Man Unlimited #11 (Marvel)
51. Top Cow Secrets—W. L. Edition (Image)
52. Venom: Along Came a Spider #2 (Marvel)
53. Robin #25 (DC)
54. Wonder Woman #106 (DC)
55. Azrael #13 (DC)
56. X-Men 2099 #29 (Marvel)
57. Avengelyne: Power #3 (Maximum)
58. X-Men: Books of Askani (Marvel)
59. Avengers: Timeslide #1 (Marvel)
60. Catwoman #29 (DC)
61. Star Wars: X-Wing—Rogue S. #6 (D. Horse)
62. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #6 (Marvel)
63. Fantastic Four #409 (Marvel)
64. Green Lantern #71 (DC)
65. Amazing Fantasy #18 (Marvel)
66. Avengers #396 (Marvel)
67. Man-Bat #1 (DC)
68. Grifter #8 (Image)
69. The Maxx #21 (Image)
70. Captain America #448 (Marvel)
71. Shi Fan Appreciation Ed. #2 (Crusade)
72. GI Joe #1 (Dark Horse)
73. Thor #495 (Marvel)
74. All New Exiles #3 (Malibu)
75. Prophet (vol. 2) #4 (Image)
76. Ripclaw #3 (Image)
77. Pitt #1/2 (Full Bleed)
78. Spider-Man 2099 #40 (Marvel)
79. Superboy #24 (DC)
80. Green Goblin #5 (Marvel)
81. Backlash #15 (Image)
82. StormWatch #31 (Image)
83. Sovereign Seven #8 (DC)
84. Flash #110 (DC)
85. Vamps: Hollywood & Vein #1 (DC)
86. Iron Man #325 (Marvel)
87. Glory & Friends Christmas Spec. #1 (Image)
88. Rune vs. Venom #1 (Malibu)
89. Savage Dragon #25 (Image)
90. Velocity #3 (Image)
91. Spider-Man Holiday Special '95 (Marvel)
92. Silver Surfer #113 (Marvel)
93. What If? #82 (Marvel)
94. New Warriors #68 (Marvel)
95. Chapel #5 (Image)
96. Cybernary #2 (Image)
97. Vogue #3 (Image)
98. Fantastic Four 2099 #2 (Marvel)
99. Deathblow #23 (Image)
100. Iron Man: Age of Innocence #1 (Marvel)

AT THE TOP:

DC versus Marvel #1 was obviously the top-selling book for December. This massive crossover event has had everyone in the industry talking for months. The high cover price apparently didn't scare retailers away from ordering this issue, which is a good sign showing retailers will get behind a product they believe in. *Gen[13]*'s immense popularity put issue #7 in spot #7, while the team's crossover with The Maxx gave the purple guy his best sales ever, and probably many new readers. The X-Woman Storm scored very impressively, even two spots above *Sensational Spider-Man* #1. *Sensational*, written and drawn by industry star Dan Jurgens, hit some big order numbers this month, as expected. Jurgens' work is apparently already bringing a huge amount of excitement—and fans—to the Spider-verse. The $5.95 price of *Logan*—which did well at #23—kept retailers from taking a risk and ordering tons, while the name itself threw people for a loop: Not everyone knows that Logan is Wolverine's real name.

IN THE MIDDLE:

DC's *Batman* title placed higher than all of Superman's this month, while *Robin* perched on a solid #53 spot—could this be a side effect of the still-present "Batman Forever" hype? Even after all these movieless years, *Star Wars* has been making an incredible comic book comeback, thanks to Dark Horse's current releases, several of which placed in this month's Top 100. "The Phoenix Resurrection" storyline starring the X-Men gave Malibu's line new life as it brought back Marvel's Phoenix character and brought X-fans to its revamped Ultraverse.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

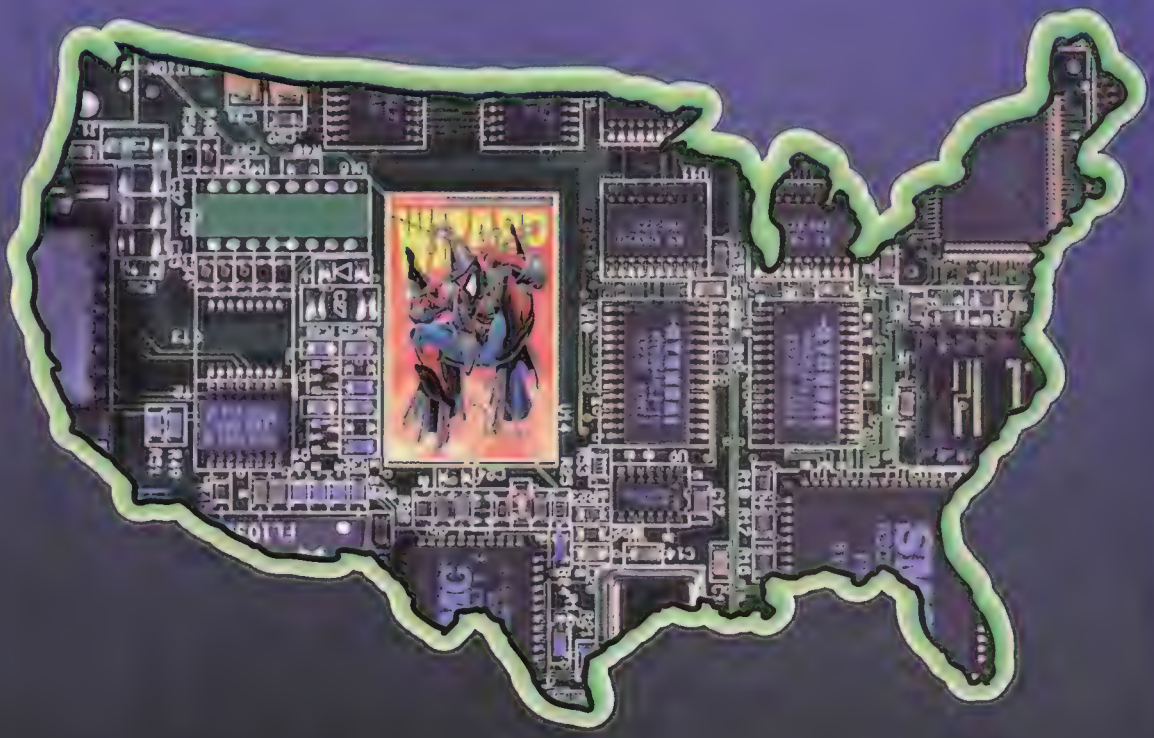
GI Joe's return to comics fared well, with Dark Horse holding the reins this time around. As you might recall, Marvel canceled its long-running series in 1994, due to poor sales. Dark Horse's new version apparently has fans and retailers behind it with hopes of a strong future ahead of it. Meanwhile, the return of Vertigo's *Vamps*—chomping into the #85 slot—may have a more successful ride than the first hit miniseries. *Captain America* and its creative team of Mark Waid and Ron Garney took issue #448 all the way to #70 on the list.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: WizardTGTC@aol.com

Wire Into Wizard



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bullpen

YAY Y...PRESENTS!

The only thing better than getting presents is getting a crapload of 'em, even if some of 'em suck. And suck some of them did. Here's some of the best and worst gifts us *Wizard* staffers got:

Brian Cunningham—Best: Buzz Lightyear talking/moving bank. Worst: "A Very Brady Christmas" videotape.

Bob Marshall—Best: Rhino figure. Worst: Five-piece Barney puzzle.

Jim McLauchlin—Best: Lots of booze. Worst: Too much booze.

Buddy Scalera—Best: Sony PlayStation. Worst: Bugle Boy jeans that don't fit.

Dan Reilly—Best: A travel version of the Perfection game! Worst: Yucky beige sweater, from his mother.

Marc Wilkofsky—Best: An R.E.M. calendar. Worst: Herring in tomato sauce from Bill Tucci.

Mike Fasolo—Best: *The 11th Hour* video game. Worst: "It's a Wonderful Life"—the *colorized* version/travesty!

Andrew Kardon—Best: Cuisinart. Worst: A really annoying cold.

Pat McCallum—Best: The love of my life back in my life. Worst: Chinese finger trap that really, really worked. Ouch.

WHERE WERE THE HANSONS?

"We used to be pathetic, but we got a lot better," sighed *Wizard* Editor Brian Cunningham in regards to the first season of the mighty Wizard Press hockey team. Labeled "The Wizards" (...ugh...), the team, led by *Wizard* Managing Editor Scott Gramling, recently made the playoffs by the skin of their collective teeth. "Umm...we came in next-to-last place, but in this league everybody makes the playoffs," Brian claimed. "We kinda made it by default." Undaunted, the urine-yellow-clad gladiators have entered the single-elimination playoffs...and scored their first win! Yeah, only three more, and the trophy's ours! We'll have the lowdown on how bad we did next month.

WHAT ANNOYED US THIS MONTH

$3.95? *$3.95?!?* When did the comic publishers decide the best way to help this industry was to drastically raise the cover prices of books? How are young kids supposed to handle buying their comics every week when they're three or four bucks a pop? Hey, comic-publishing people, kick loose the fancy covers, the super-glossy paper and the acetate nonsense, and try and get new readers into the hobby. You might even lure back some of those who left. If we're lucky.

MORT OF THE MONTH

MERRY: THE GIRL OF A THOUSAND GIMMICKS

Okay, where do we start? Merry Creamer was born to a acrobat/cat thief, was stuffed in an orphanage when the old man was busted by the cops (Hey! Red hair...orphanage...insatiable appetite for human flesh...she's Annie!). She was eventually adopted by the parents of Sylvester Pemberton Jr. (this can't get any worse), a.k.a. the Star-Spangled Kid, crimefighter extraordinaire (Dear God—it just won't stop!). She soon started teaming up with her...super sibling, becoming "the girl of a thousand gimmicks," and eventually died from stress. Good.

MORT-O-METER:

CHECK LIST

InQuest #11

Hotter than Anne Nicole Smith in a hand towel (well, before she got all fat and stuff) comes the eleventh scalding issue of *InQuest*! Beneath the **Darth Vader/Boba Fett photo cover** lurks all sorts of super-keen stuff, including the coolest *Magic: The Gathering* expansion sets that don't exist, an in-depth **Larry Elmore interview**, the true story behind Cthulhu and Lovecraft, **how to build *Magic* killer decks** and all sorts of other neat stuff.

Also jammed in this issue are **playable *Sim City* and *WildStorms* cards**, a chance to win Ed Beard Jr. original art and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take Cthulhu, dark god of destruction, out on a date!

So exciting it'll kill you if you're old, and only **$3.99!**

CONTEST WINNERS

These are the swingin' Grand Prize winners to several past *Wizard* contests. Congrats, folks!

HANGIN' WITH TODD, ISSUE #50

The resumé of David Bluestein, of Thorn Hill, Ontario, Can. must've really stood out of the pile, 'cause David spent an entire day as an actual employee of Todd McFarlane Productions—working as Todd's assistant! Jealous must be an understatement for millions of Todd fans, huh? Good goin', David!

UNDERWORLD UNLEASHED, #50

If you look on page 19 in DC's *Underworld Unleashed #2*, you'll find our own Assistant Price Guide Editor Phil Colligan in the merciless hands of the new Copperhead. Well, Brian Thomer of Philadelphia, Pa. heroically found Phil, and scores a solid piece of original *UU* art by Howard Porter and Dan Green! Plus a thank-you hug from the rescued Phil. "Hi."

next month

TOP TEN

Top 10 ways we'd help Marvel's sluggish stock

10) A special offer where for each share of Marvel stock purchased, Marvel will re-kill a previously killed character and keep them dead.
9) Buy NYC streets and charge tolls.
8) Hire some...whattaya call 'em...talented writers.
7) Sell rights to all Marvel films to Comedy Central, pocket cash.
6) *Secret Wars III*!
5) Tradmark and copyright "X-Mas." Any mention of X-Mas will bring instant royalties! (Hey, it almost worked with *X-O Manowar* and *Warriors of Plasm*.)
4) Hunt down anybody at Marvel in a suit and beat them. Put the people who care about comics in charge.
3) One BIIIIG enema.
2) Have the Jackal clone the stock.
1) Five words: Keep-Squeezin'-Them-Monkeys Lad.

C.B.IQ. ANSWERS

1. A	6. D	11. B	16. B
2. D	7. C	12. C	17. B
3. D	8. A	13. D	18. D
4. B	9. A	14. D	19. B
5. A	10. A	15. B	20. C

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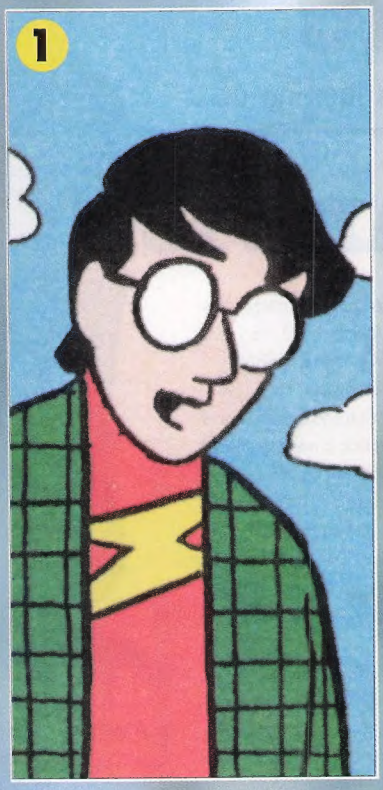

1. Manga Explained

What the hell is manga? Why are everybody's eyes so big? What's the deal with alla them speed lines? Curious about Japanese comics but clueless as to what it's all about? Join Scott McCloud, the award-winning author of *Understanding Comics*, as he personally teaches you all there is to know about this popular art form.

2. Shi & Tucci

Join overnight sensation Bill Tucci as he explains how he wasn't really an overnight sensation. With a lot of hard work, dedication and determination, this ex-janitor went from emptying garbage cans to working on *Shi*, one of the most popular comics in the country today.

3. Win an *Amazing Fantasy* #15 Mint-Card Mold!

Highland Mint has been producing several groovy-looking gold-plated replicas of classic Marvel comic covers, and *you* can win the original mold for the sculpting of the supersnazzy *Amazing Fantasy* #15 Mint-Card! Featuring the first appearance of Spider-Man! We'll tell you how!

4. Teen Beat

They have superpowers, dress in ultrabright colors and fight crime. Other than that, they're just like you. Tag along as we trace the history of teen heroes, and see how they've evolved from somebody for the bad guys to tie up to one of the hottest trends in comics.

Wizard #56

Special Manga issue! On sale in February

WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

PAUL CHADWICK

Nobody encouraged Paul Chadwick to get into comics. But legendary comic book and sci-fi writer Harry Harrison indirectly did everything he could to talk the 38-year-old creator of Concrete out of it.

"I read this Harry Harrison interview," laughs Chadwick. "He's a wonderful writer but a cynical, bitter dude, and he went on and on about how all comic book writers lived in their basements and that it was a dead-end profession." This statement firmly influenced Chadwick's occupation choice: "I immediately decided to be a [professional] illustrator."

Later on, Chadwick fell back on the comic track with the creation of Concrete, an idea that he laughingly claims "was very Freudian."

"I've always liked a lot of heavy covers on me when I sleep and I used to imagine myself buried in rubble. I guess on some level I saw myself being protected by being sheathed in stone."

The shy and introspective Chadwick, born and raised in Bellevue, Wash., took Harrison's dire warnings to heart, and eventually moved to Los Angeles and The Art Center School of Design. "After college I got into movie storyboarding because I felt it was just like doing comics. I worked for Disney for a year and then spent the next five years freelancing for different studios." While none of his Disney work showed up anywhere, his freelance time brought feature films like "Pee Wee's Big Adventure" and "The Big Easy" to the screen.

But the urge to do *Concrete*—the story of a Congressional speechwriter whose brain was placed inside a concrete-like creature—reemerged in 1983 when Chadwick, armed with a sample issue he self-produced, went to the San Diego Con. "I didn't get a single offer but I kept at it. In 1985 I got eight offers, but I went with Dark Horse because they seemed to want it so badly."

Chadwick's hero made his debut in *Dark Horse Presents* #1, which led to an ongoing series. He moved to Connecticut in 1986 and continued putting out *Concrete* on a regular basis. But, by 1989, after 11 issues of *Concrete*, he began waffling on the whole comic book thing. "I had always thought of myself as a painter and in my mind was only going to do comics for a while." So Chadwick took a year off to illustrate, but soon realized that the comic pull was much too strong.

He returned to *Concrete*, and in 1993 joined the prestigious Legend imprint and began working on the *Concrete: Killer Smile* mini-series published shortly thereafter. And then he moved back to Bellevue.

While doing *Concrete*, he also found time to do outside projects such as covers for *Superman Christmas Annual* #2, *Tomb of Dracula*, *Open Space* and *Stalkers*, all of which have been released. His next Concrete epic *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain*, due out in early 1996, will contain, he promises, "lots of suspense, humor, sexual tension and small, painless snippets of natural history."

by Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
Marvel Presents #3 [which debuted the Guardians of the Galaxy]

Favorite comic of all time...
Watchmen. I think it's the "Citizen Kane" of our field.

Favorite work of your own...
The Everest story in *Concrete* #8 and #9.

Comics you currently read...
The Book of Ballads and Sagas, *Tales from the Zone*, *Astro City*

The one person you'd like to meet...
José Segrelles, a turn-of-the-century Spanish fantasy illustrator.

Superpower you would most want...
The ability to project any image I could imagine.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
A toasted corn tortilla with taco sauce on it.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid, it was Big Lou, this big plastic robot. As an adult, The Blind Watchmaker, a computer evolution simulator.

Things you collect...
Turn-of-the-century art books.

Person who would play you in a movie...
My mom says Robert Urich.

Favorite cartoon...
"Bambi meets Godzilla"

People you would most like to work with...
Mike Kaluta and Charles Vess

Favorite musical performer...
Keith Jarrett

Favorite TV show...
"This Week with David Brinkley"

Last good movie you saw...
"Devil in a Blue Dress"

Last good book you read...
The Ninth Land, by William Hope Hodgeson

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I would make everybody live for a thousand years, but they would have to think about having children every night for an entire year before they could have one.

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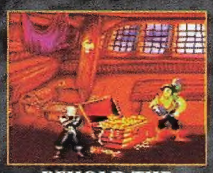

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